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APPRECIATION OF LITERATURE

AND

AMERICA IN LITERATURE

BY

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APPRECIATION OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

FIRST PRINCIPLES

LITERATURE is an art of expression. The material which it employs is experience; or, in other words, literature is the expression of life. Action, emotion and thought are the three great divisions of life, and constitute experience. Literature undertakes to represent such experience through the medium of language, and to bring it home to the understanding of the reader. It is obvious that literature makes its appeal to the individual mind and is intelligible only in so far as the individual is able to comprehend its language and interpret the experience there embedded.

A good reader is an author's best fortune, for the writer strives in vain unless he be understood. The reader's own experience is the key to literature. It may be direct experience, events and passions personal to himself; or it may be indirect, events and passions observed in the career of others, or at least learned by report; but in any case the power to understand indirect experience, that is, experience not one's own, depends on the existence of a common human nature and on the share of it which the reader has already realized in his own life and self-consciousness.

It is by sympathy and imagination that one enters into the lives and fortunes of others; and these two

faculties, which are the great interpretative powers of literature, have richness, strength and scope in proportion to the quality and quantity of individual experience, to the depth and range of one's own life. Sympathy and imagination are the faculties which literature most cultivates by exercise, and the enlightenment which literature brings is in the main achieved through them.

It is plain that the appreciation of literature is a continuing process, and depends on increase of experience in the personal life and on growth of the imaginative and sympathetic powers; hence it is changeable in taste and standard, and varies from one stage of life to another. It is a measure of growth because it proceeds from growth; to love the poets is a certificate of manhood, a proof that one has put forth the powers and appropriated the means of life, that one is on the way at least to be humanized.

Literature is the foremost of the humanities, of those instrumentalities by which man becomes more completely human; and in the individual this end is furthered in proportion as he understands human nature in others under its various modes and brings forth from it in himself the richest experience of its capacities. Openness to experience, or sensibility, is the prime quality of the good reader; and to this the writer adds, on the active or creative side, the power of expression through language. These two faculties are the essential constituents of literary genius.

The appropriation of a work of genius is, in a certain sense, a repetition of the act of creation under different circumstances, and the good reader must share in the genius of his author in however pale a form and on however low a scale. It has long been recognized that

this likeness exists between the two; for the act of reading is a blending of two souls, nor is it seldom that the reader brings the best part, vivifying his author with his own memory and aspiration and imparting a flame to the words from his own soul.

The appreciation of literature is thus by no means a simple matter; it is not the ability to read, nor even a canon of criticism and rules of admiration and censure that are required; but a live soul, full of curiosity and interest in life, sensitive to impressions, acute and subtle in reception, prompt to complete a suggestion, and always ready with the light of its own life to serve as a lamp unto its feet. Appreciation of literature, too, is neither rapid nor final; it moves with no swifter step than life itself, and it opens, like life, always on larger horizons and other labors.

Experience, such as has been indicated, is usually found in literature in a complex form. It may be usefully discriminated as either personal, national or universal, and in authors individually some one of these kinds is generally predominant. Byron is the type of the personal writer, interested in his own moods and fortunes, egotistic in all his life forces, creating his heroes in his own image and repeating in them his qualities, his ambitions and disillusions, giving his confession through their lips. Virgil is the most distinguished example of the national writer; one always thinks of Rome in the same breath, — "Roman Virgil," as Tennyson begins his noble tribute. Virgil set forth the specific and peculiar experience of the Roman state, giving expression to common traits and interests, the tradition and ideals and manners of the empire that had come to be out of the toil of the fathers and was then the glory of the earth.

Universal experience is that which is the same for all men, whatever their race, country or age, and is exemplified most plainly by the stories of Scripture which have had greatest currency, and in a single author most purely by Shakespeare. The scale of experience with which literature deals, in other words, begins with the narrow circle of the writer's own life and widens out through his city, people, nation, his age, until it includes humanity as such; and in the final and simplest form this experience is of interest, not because it was one man's or one nation's, but because it may be the experience of any man put in such circumstances.

Every man has this threefold ply in his life; he has that human nature which is common to the race with its unchanging passions, needs and vicissitude of human events, and he adds to this the special traits of his age and country, which he also has in common with his fellows; and besides he possesses peculiarities of character and temperament and fortune in life in which his individuality lies.

Literature corresponds to this arrangement by presenting its work similarly woven of individual, national and universal strands, and it has more breadth of significance in proportion as it embodies experience most purely in the Shakesperian or Scriptural type. The appreciation of literature in this type is most ready, in the greatest number of cases, because a certain preparation in history or biography is necessary to the comprehension of the national and personal types. The direct appeal to experience, in other words, without the intervention of study, is made on the ground of universal life; and to this kind, by virtue of the universal element in it, the most enduring literature belongs.

To approach the matter in another way, life is infinite in the number of its phenomena, which taken together make up experience; but there is great sameness in the phenomena. The monotony of human life is one of the final and persistent impressions made upon the reader as upon the traveler. It is natural, therefore, that a love song that was merely a personal effusion of feeling sung in Persia centuries ago should seem to pour forth the genuine emotion of some lover of to-day in a far-off land and should serve him as the verbal channel of his joy or grief.

Emotion has thus prepared for it in lyric poetry of all lands a ritual already written and established. Action, likewise, whose poetic form is epic and dramatic poetry, has a literature of war and passion that passes current everywhere; and thought, the third great form of experience, which is set forth in philosophy or science, sums up its formulas of knowledge and wisdom which serve equally in all languages. The common element is so great, the limits of human experience in all its forms are so restricted, that there results this easy communication and interchange between races and ages.

Literature, so built up and disseminated, while it always offers a wealth of expression for the normal and mediocre experience of life, the commonplace, nevertheless tends to prefer, in its high examples, that which is surpassing in emotion, action and thought, and to conserve this, however far beyond reality, as the mode of overflow of the human soul in its aspiration and its dream of what is possible to itself. Man is a dreamer even more than he is an actor; his actions indeed are hardly more than fragments and relics of his dreams. This is the realm of the ideal, and literature treasures there its greatest

works, those which are especially regarded as its works of high genius in creative imagination.

The material is still experience, and the expression sought is still the expression of life, but it is experience transformed by being newly arranged and it is life expressed rather in its function of power than in its operation of reality. This change which passes upon experience and gives scope to the soul's power is brought about by the intervention of art; for literature is not a record of experience primarily and simply, but it is an art using experience for ulterior ends.

Experience, things as they occur, the mere material of expression, is raw material, a crude agglomeration, life just as it comes to pass. If a newspaper were the complete history of a day, as a journalist once defined it, this would be an example of the expression in language of such experience; but it would not be literature, because there would have been no intervention of art in the case.

The primary step in art is selection from the crude mass of material of such parts as will serve the purpose of the writer; these parts are then combined so as to make a whole, that is, they are put in necessary relations one with another such that if any part were to be taken away the whole would fall to pieces through lack of support; a whole so constructed is said to have organic unity, the unity of an organism. This unity is the end of art, and the steps to it are selection and logical combination. This is true of the arts in general, and gave rise to Michael Angelo's well-known definition, — "art is the purgation of superfluities." In literature such construction is illustrated by the general nature of plot, which is a connection of events in the relation of cause

and effect such that each is necessary to the course and issue of the action as a whole, and none superfluous.

Hardly inferior to the use of plot in the field of action as an artistic resource in literature is the employment of type in the field of character; here a similar process of selection takes place in consequence of which the person, or type, possesses all the qualities common to a class of individuals and no quality peculiar to any one individual; this is ideal character. Thus Romeo is all a lover, Achilles all a hero, Iago all a villain. Ideal character, or type, and ideal action, or plot, are the two great modes of creative art in imaginative literature; but there are besides many other artistic means employed by literature in its representation of life. These two serve sufficiently to illustrate the use of art made by literature, which is to clarify the experience which is its material; thus plot rationalizes events under the law of cause and effect, and type simplifies character by presenting it under a single and immutable aspect, or by restricting attention to a few phases of it within a narrow range.

Without entering on the mazes of esthetic theory, where there is little certainty, it is enough to observe that art in general seeks order in life and obtains it by a process of segregation and recombination, whether the order so found be something plucked from the chaos of nature and revealed as an inner harmony of the universe, or be merely the grace flowing from man upon the world and the illusion of his limiting intelligence.

The presence of this order in art is plain; and also the principle of clarification, of simplification, of economy in the interest of an intelligible and comprehensive conception of experience, operating to disclose this order, is likewise to be observed. Whatever may be the validity

of art, in the philosophic sense, what is essential here is the simple fact of its presence as the mode by which literature deals with experience in order to draw from life its use and meaning for men.

The conclusion is that literature represents life in certain formal ways; a degree of formalism is indeed inseparable from literature, as from all the other arts, and some acquaintance with its traditionary forms is indispensable to the appreciation of its contents, while, besides, the pleasure of the forms themselves is a part of its real value. The importance of the formal side of literature is not lessened by the fact that the perception of form and delight in it are not English traits in a high degree; in this respect the southern nations excel the northern peoples by far; it is probable, indeed, that for the English generally, in approaching their literature, there is a sense of artificiality in the mere form of verse greater than they feel in the case of a picture or a statue. The external form, which is generally described as technique, is really no more artificial than the internal form, which consists in the development of the theme independently of its melodic investiture; neither is truly artificial, but both belong under artistic formalism, which is the method whereby great imaginative literature takes body and acquires its intense and enduring life.

In correspondence with the three kinds of experience, personal, national and universal, each recreated in artistic form, there are three modes of critical approach to literature in order to interpret and understand its contents.

The first and simplest is the purely esthetic, and is especially applicable to universal literature; it looks only at the work, which is freed from conditions of time and place and origin, analyzes its qualities, compares it with others,

classifies, and so judges it under formal criteria by itself alone and for its own sake as an incarnation of that human life, an expression of that human spirit, which is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, at least within the range of the arc which art has thus far measured; it is this sameness in the soul, as interpreted by art, which justifies the absolute nature of this mode of criticism.

The second is the purely historical mode of approach, and is appropriate to the national element in experience and the works which most embody it in whatever form, it looks at the environment, examines race, country and epoch, and seeks to understand the work as merely the result of general social forces and broad conditions and as the necessary and, as it were, fatal expression of these, and allows the least possible part to individual choice or influence.

The third mode, which is more proper to the personal element, is the psychological; it looks at the personality of the writer and seeks to interpret his work as the result and expression of his peculiar temperament and faculty under the personal conditions of his birth, education and opportunities.

All three are useful methods and are alike indispensable; and as literature normally presents the three kinds of experience blended, and seldom singly in a pure form, it is generally necessary to employ the three kinds of criticism, without giving undue advantage to any one of them, in order to grasp any great work fully in its personality, its historical significance and its universal and imperishable esthetic value. It is nevertheless true that mere biography and mere history are not, properly speaking, literary elements, when literature is regarded as a fine art; they are adjuncts to the interpretation of

the work just as grammar may be, or archeology, or any other subsidiary aid; but the characteristic value of any literary work, that which makes it literature, is independent of these and is a more vital and enduring thing. This value lies in its being a work of art.

The critical approach to literature by whatever mode implies study, an acquired knowledge of biography or history or of artistic forms. The direct aim of all art, however, is to please, and to please immediately; study may be a part of the necessary preparation for appreciation, but it does not enter into the appreciation itself. It is useful to recognize at once the fact that literature is not an object of study, but a mode of pleasure; it is not a thing to be known merely like science, but to be lived. If a book does not yield immediate pleasure to the reader, as direct and intimate as sensation or emotion, it fails with that particular person to discharge the proper function of literature. The typical example of the operation of literature is found in the company of warriors listening to the old minstrel who relates the heroic deeds and tragic histories that make up the tradition of the tribe, or in the groups in the medieval market-place who hung on the lips of the traveler telling tales, the poet chanting lays, or the players representing in rude scenes the comedy of human life.

This is not to say that the hearer is without some preparation, but not that of study. Even the simplest books, such as those about nature, require that there should have been in the reader some previous life, some training of the eye, some curiosity about birds and beasts and the treasure-trove of the seabeach. The having lived is the essential condition of any appreciation; or, in other words, the appeal to experience, lies back of

all literary pleasure. The more direct this is, the better; and literature rises in the scale of value in proportion as the appeal is made to broader and wider experience, to more and more of life already realized in the reader himself. His life with nature must be wide and deep before he can appreciate normally and easily the greater works of poetic imagination in which nature is employed as the channel of high passion, as the symbol of philosophic truth, or even as the harmonious and enhancing environment of scenes of love or tragedy. That reader does best who in his use of literature insists on the presence of this immediate appeal to himself in the books he reads. If the book does not have this effect with him, if it does not coöperate with his own taste and interest, it may be the best of books for others, but it is not for him, — at least it is not yet for him.

Study, the conscious preparation to understand, begins when the difficulty of appreciation becomes insurmountable by private and personal experience. The obstacle is, in the main, merely a defect in experience such as to impair his powers of imagination and sympathy which interpret other lives and experience not his own to himself. This obstacle rises especially in past literature and it increases in proportion to the antiquity or foreignness of the literature, in general, in the degree to which the literature involves different conditions of life from those which are contemporary. It is here that scholarship of all sorts has its function in the endeavor to make contemporary in thought the past phases of life.

The soul is essentially the same in all men; yet its temperament, its consciousness of the world and of itself, its faith and the modes of its ambition and consolation are widely different in the various races and civilizations.

It is extremely difficult even for a trained and instructed imagination to realize the world of a medieval saint or of a Greek sophist or of a Jewish enthusiast of the age of the prophets. If one attempts to reconstruct the physical aspect of such a man's thought of the heavens and the earth, and then adds, as best he can, the intellectual and moral contents of such a mind and heart, he seems moving in a world of mistake and ignorance so different from our own as to seem a mad world.

It is curious how often the past world of our own blood, its scheme of knowledge and scope of meditation and passion, take on this form of apparent madness in the eyes of a modern reader who stops to think. Still more, if one attempts to reconstruct the world of the Arab, the Hindoo, the Chinese, the task grows hopeless; looking into the faces of the orientals, eye to eye, is a blanker thing than gazing at the Sphinx; the mystery of personality seems unfathomable in men by whom fundamental ideas are so differently held and conceived as often to be unintelligible to us and hardly recognizable; and we conclude briefly, — "the oriental is inscrutable." The attempt to fathom a foreign literature is like that of acquiring the language; at first it seems easy, but with progress it becomes hard; and it is the same, but in an infinitely greater degree, with the task of acquiring an Italian or an Arab or a Hindoo soul.

The defect of experience in our case allows the imagination to work only imperfectly in constructing, and the sympathies to flow inadequately in interpreting, the scenes, passions and moods of other lands and peoples; and literature loses its power in proportion as its necessary appeal to ourselves diminishes. We read Greek books, but not as the Greeks read them; and one of the

strange qualities of immortal books is that they permit themselves to be so read and yet to give forth an intelligible and supreme meaning. The reader takes so much of the book as has affinity with him, and it is as if the book were re-written in his mind; indeed, it often happens that the book which was written is not the book which is read, so great is the reader's share in that blending of two souls which is the act of reading; it was certainly thus, for example, that Emerson read Hafiz. The reader's mind enters into every book, but especially into works of imagination; there is something private in his understanding of his author, and this is a greater element in proportion to the vitality and richness of his mind; what he makes of an ancient or a foreign book is often, it must be suspected, something that departs widely from the original author's design. The function of scholarship, in appreciation, is so to inform the reader with respect to the material and environment of the book that he may have the truest possible operation of imagination and the freest possible play of sympathy in appropriating the book; but, in comparison with contemporary and native appreciation, it is usually a limited success which is thus gained.

As the study of biography, history, archæology and other lights on past conditions or alien civilizations are aids to the reader in understanding and appropriating unfamiliar experience, so some study of artistic forms of expression assists him in appreciating literature, particularly in its higher and more refined phases. In poetry, especially, a modest acquaintance with the melodic modes of languages is indispensable; but it need not exceed the limits which would similarly be set for an elementary appreciation of music. It is not a knowledge of prosody,

of the different varieties of meter and their combinations, of the technique of verse as taught in books that is necessary; such study is, for the most part, wearisome and fruitless.

The essential thing is to be able to read verse, and to read it intelligently so that it declares itself to be verse and not prose by the mere fall of the syllables. It is extraordinary how rare this power has become. It is true that in older modes of education, such as the Greek, the melodic modes of the language were defined and held by the concurrence of the instrument and the dance with the choral movement of the words; but verse, even when not so sustained, has a clear movement of its own. The ear should be trained by the oral repetition of verse, if it is to be true; but this is seldom done in any effective way. It is not only the keen sense of the melody of verse which has been lost; the significance of the line and the phrase as units of composition is also seldom known. It is not possible to appreciate verse unless it is correctly read, nor to realize its beauty without some sense of its structure, that is, of the unitary value of phrase, line, and stanza, and of the mode of their combination to build up the whole into one poem. To perceive melodic time in verse with its subtle modulation of cadence and rhythm, and to be aware of the interlacing and close junction of phrase and line in which much of the grace and felicity of poetry resides, are labors neither difficult nor long; a little intelligent attention suffices to acquire this power and with it the formal pleasure of literature begins. The way once entered on may lead so far as to the appreciation of a Greek ode or even to pleasure in the intricacies of a Persian song.

It is not, however, necessary to go to such lengths.

The forms of poetry have their effect, like the forms of other arts, without elaborate study or developed knowledge of technique. Oratory is a mode of address full of artifice, but it is artifice grounded upon nature, so that it sways the "fierce democratie" by itself, and the forms of poetry are similarly grounded upon nature, and its music plays upon the heart and mind of men by a necessity of their constitution. A scientific and technical knowledge is by no means required of the reader; but an elementary acquaintance with melody and structure, such as to allow correct reading and the perception of the harmonious confinement of thought within the limits of the musical beats of phrase and line, is hardly to be dispensed with.

It is questionable, on the other hand, whether much is gained by study of the artistic field in larger matters, such as, for example, dramatic construction. In that direction the reader turns his attention from the work to the workmanship, and may embarrass himself with theory, or preconceptions not universally applicable. But without setting limits to study of whatever sort, for all modes of study have possible uses, it is to be laid down in general that all study of literature in the way of preparation to grasp and understand, whether it be linguistic, historical or esthetic, evists to be forgotten and laid off as soon as it is completed; its end is to withdraw one by one the veils, and leave the reader alone with the spirit of the book, which then speaks to him face to face. All the rest was but preliminary; it is only then that he begins to read.

The uses of study in all its kinds being thus subsidiary and a means of remedying defects in the power of imagination, sympathy and perception of form, the reader is

at last thrown fairly back upon his own experience, or the kind and quality of the life he has lived, for his appreciation of literature; he is left to himself. If the light is not in him, he cannot see; and, in general, large parts of literature remain dark and, even in authors whom he comprehends in the main portions, continue obscure. This is especially true of the greatest works of genius. For the reader the measure of his understanding of the author is the measure of the author; and from this there is no appeal. It results from these conditions that literature is slowly appropriated and is a thing of growth. The reader cannot transcend at the moment his own season; as a child he reads as a child, and as a man as a man. A boy of ten may read Homer, but he reads him with the power of a boy of ten. It is a child's Homer. The dependence of the book on the reader being so strict, it is always advisable to keep literary study on a near level with life as it is in the individual case.

The natural introduction to literature for the very young is by means of that universal sort which is selected from all ages and requires no study, such as the stories of Scripture, short legendary tales of history, beast and bird fables, fairy tales and the like. They have, besides their intelligibility, the advantage of accustoming the mind to a make-believe world, natural to childish fancy, and so laying the foundation for that principle of convention which is fundamental in art and indispensable in its practise, and also of making the contemplation of imaginary experience habitual so that there is no shock between it and truth. The transposition by which human experience is placed in the bird and beast world is a literary fiction; as an element in early education it helps to give that plasticity to the world of fact which is

essential to the artistic interpretation of life and the imaginary habit of mind. The serious study of one's own literature is most fruitfully begun by acquaintance with those authors who are in vogue and nearly contemporary, the literature of the century preceding, on the well-worn principle of proceeding in knowledge from the better-known to less well-known, and because there is the minimum of necessary study intervening between author and reader.

To approach and have practise in the literature that requires study there is nothing better for the beginner than Greek literature, and it has the peculiar advantage for broadening the mind of being a pagan literature and yet closely kindred to our own, presenting human experience under very different conditions from the present, and yet easily realizable in wise and beautiful forms. In Greek literature, too, the universal element is greater than in any other, and this facilitates its comprehension while the mind becomes accustomed to the mixture with the universal of the past, the temporal, the racial, the obscure, the dead.

It is advisable, also, in these early choices and initial steps to consider the season of the reader, to begin with books in which action has a large share and postpone those in which thought is dominant, to favor those of simple rather than of refined emotion, to keep in all things near to the time of life and to that experience especially which is nascent if not already arrived in the reader. And what is true of the beginner is true for every later period. It is best to be honest with oneself, and to respect one's own tastes and predilections; not to read books because they are classics, if they yield no true pleasure, not to force a tame liking, not to feign to oneself,

or in other ways to confuse what it is said one ought to like with what one does like sincerely.

It is always to be borne in mind that appreciation is a thing of growth. A great book does not give itself all at once, nor perhaps quickly, but the maxim holds good, — slow love is long love. Books naturally fall into three classes: those that are outlived, because the experience they contain and address is shallow or transitory; those that are arrived at late because the experience involved is mature; and those, the greatest, which give something to the youngest and have something left to give to the oldest, which keep pace with life itself and like life disclose themselves more profoundly, intimately and in expanding values with familiarity.

The secret of appreciation is to share the passion for life that literature itself exemplifies and contains; out of real experience, the best that one can have, to possess oneself of that imaginary experience which is the stuff of larger life and the place of the ideal expansion of the soul, the gateway to which is art in all forms and primarily literature; to avail oneself of that for pleasure and wisdom and fullness of life. It is those minds which are thus experienced that alone come to be on the level of the greatest works and to absorb their life; but the way is by a gradual ascent, by natural growth, by maintaining a vital relation with what is read. So long as the bond between author and reader is a living bond, appreciation is secure.

CHAPTER II

LYRICAL POETRY

The lyric is primarily the expression of emotion. In the beginning emotion was expressed by inarticulate cries, of which the developed artistic form in civilization is pure music. It was originally accompanied by the dance, and the literary element appears to have entered first as a short chanted phrase in monotonous repetition. In the evolution of civilization these several elements have given rise to different arts, and the lyric now stands by itself as the expression of emotion by words, apart from the dance or music in the strict sense. It remains true, however, that the substance of the lyric, the essential experience which it contains, is the emotion, and not the image set forth in words which indeed exists only to suggest or discharge the emotion. This is a fundamental consideration. The emotion is seen throbbing as it were in the image, as you may see a bird's throat throb with its song; what you see is the outward color and movement; what you hear is the song, that emotion which in itself is imageless, a thing felt, not beheld. The substance of meaning in the poem is the emotion roused by the suggestion of the image; and however personal the lyric may be, it is universalized and made good for all men by the emotion which is the same in human nature. Lyrics, strictly speaking, are symbols of universal emotion which is conveyed or roused by the imagery.

Emotion is constant in life. It is a thing of unrest; it rises, grows, and passes away; but it comes again and again. Life is full of these vague waves; and perhaps one reason why lyric poetry holds so leading a place in literature, and is the quickest and surest appeal of the poets, is because it furnishes definite form, in these symbols of universal emotion, for the concentration and expression, under the intellectual form of an image, of that vague feeling that finds its emotional form most surely in music. The lyric defines and releases this vague emotion which is forever arising in experience; this is its function, its ground of being in art, its use to the world. It gives feeling a career in life, and finds for it temporary assuagement and repose. It belongs to the universality of emotion that the imagery of lyric poetry has such elements of permanence. It is sometimes made a reproach to poets that they use this ancient and conventional imagery; but the nightingale and the rose, the serenade, the enclosed garden, the Eden-isle are images and situations charged with the associations of long use; they are, in fact, a ritual of love-service, and possess a ceremonial beauty and solemnity; they are parts of ancient poetic worship. They are like a fixed musical scale on which the emotion, which is the imageless burden of song, rises and falls.

If the reader be somewhat mature and accustomed to poetry, the best general view of the nature and the use of lyric verse, its range and power, is to be found in the "Greek Anthology" which is open for English readers most profitably in MacKail's volume of selections and there accompanied by a remarkable essay, interpreting the verse and bringing it home as the music of Greek life and of the universal heart at one and the same time. To be

familiar with the "Greek Anthology" is to know well-nigh the whole compass of human emotion with regard to earthly things in forms of expression unrivaled for clarity, grace, beauty, and for the wisdom of life. This book is the great monument of the lyric, and stands sole and apart. But to appreciate a work so foreign to our contemporary culture requires a high degree of cultivation; on the principles already laid down, the beginning of appreciation of lyric verse is rather to be made in one's own language and in poets nigh to our own times. Palgrave's "Golden Treasury" is still the book preferred as a collection of English lyrics; but even in that, indispensable as it is to the daily lover of English verse, the beginner is forced to pick and choose and to reject. It is best to begin with Scott's lyrics of gallant romance with their warmth of color and out-of-door freshness, or war lyrics like Campbell's with their quick flash, their humble and plain pathos, and the thunderous sound of battle gone into the verse; or, perhaps best of all with Burns, because there are so many of his poems, and the spirit of the lyric is there the master of many revels. Burns has the advantage for beginners, who find it hard to free their minds from the suspicion of effeminacy in poetry, of always making a profoundly masculine impression. Like Scott and Byron he is distinctly a man's poet, and he is more accessible, more various and especially more intimate than they are in the appeal he makes to the nascent passion, thoughts and affections of life; and the experience he brings, though set to melody and rhymes, is untransformed and genuine, and keeps near to earth, to things common and obvious, and to the comrade side of life both for wisdom and abandon. Wordsworth is in important ways a companion spirit to Burns, and Coleridge on cer-

tain sides neighbors Scott, though with profound differences. Keats and Shelley each require a certain likeness of temperament in the reader, while Byron makes a less subtle appeal. The personal, national and universal elements in these poets are easily discriminated, and their works may readily be related, by the reader who is intent on study and a knowledge of the historic course of literature, to the democratic movement of the time, to the ballad revival and the Hellenic renascence, to the Revolution, and in general to all the literary and social phenomena of that age of romanticism. But this belongs to the history of literature and is a secondary matter. It may be accepted without hesitation that a reader who has familiarized himself with and truly appropriated this group of poets is well prepared to appreciate lyric poetry in any field.

How to read the poets is, nevertheless, an art to be learned, and into it much tact enters if there be not in the reader a native and self-discovered susceptibility to literary pleasure. In the initial steps the end should be to make this discovery, to experiment with various authors in search of those to whose books the temperament and experience of the reader respond with spontaneity. There should consequently be great latitude of neglect and a free exercise of it, and the field of literature is so large and various that there is no reason to fear any essential loss. All books are not for all minds; it is a question of the right minds finding the right books by a process of natural affinity. In early years there is, however, a counterbalancing truth. A large proportion of patience is also necessary in order that a book may have a fair chance to win a hearing; and in serious study the various phases of interest in an author should be closely

regarded. As in trained observation the eye is taught to see by having its attention directed to many points of the object and acquires modes and habits of seeing, the mind must be led to look in various directions and acquire habits of conduct in reading. Often the young reader does not know what to look for in a book, as he would not know what to look for in a stone or a flower without some geological or botanical hint. It is at this stage that patience is most needed and the habit of expectant and discursive interest. This is the time of experiment when the mind is finding itself, and is often surprised into self-discovery by accident. It is thus that the chance encounter with a book has frequently marked the awakening of a life. It is therefore desirable to open the phases of an author fully, and to relate his work in divers ways to the intelligence and sympathy in search of some response, and in general to proceed from the simpler to the more complex and subtle, from reality and action to imagination and passion, and so on to thought and wisdom that are grounded on the experience depicted.

Perhaps an example may be useful, given with some degree of detail. Let the case be Burns. A condensed guide for reading his verse would run somewhat as follows. It would be noticed that he was familiar with animals, cared for them, handled them, and loved them in their degree. He thinks of them realistically as suffering brutes with a prevailing environment of hardship and sympathizes with them as a part of farm life. "To a Mouse" and "A Winter Night" are examples. Similarly, "To a Mountain Daisy" presents flowers under the same aspect of misfortune. In both cases a moral is added, giving a decided human interest to the mere natural objects, as if the mind could not rest in them, but

finds only man finally interesting to man according to the old Greek maxim. The animal life mixes with man's life actually in "The Auld Farmer to his Auld Mare," and needs no moralizing: in "The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie," the poet takes the animal's point of view. In "The Twa Dogs" while the dog character is realistic the meaning is wholly human; it is a poem of human life. The landscape, nature in its moods, is seen characteristically in broad sweeps and described barely, with no elaboration, and is predominantly sad, wintry, or pathetic. The external life is Adam's world, a world under a curse of pain, toil or fear; it is the primitive rude farm world. Thomson's "Winter" has this same atmosphere. The landscape, however, is incidental and used as a background for human life or for sentiment, from which it takes emotional beauty — a beauty reflected from the human feeling, joyful or sad as that is happy or troubled; and often the landscape thus seems to give tone to the poem while in fact it is only the halo round the poem. The moods in which the non-human elements in the verse are present, whether these are animal or inanimate, are pathos, humor, and sentiment, and rarely awe also in passages of pure description. One should note especially the bare detail of fact, well selected, and in treatment the speed and vigor, the quick realization to the eye or heart, the immediacy of the wit, humor, or sense.

"The Cotter's Saturday Night" is Burns' most generally acceptable poem. It is said to be impaired as poetry by its Englishry, or literary tradition in style and diction coming from classic English verse. Burns' religious feeling was very deep down under the surface of his days and weeks, and here is shown by his apprecia-

tion of the types in which he had respected piety in his parents. Those who censure the poem for its imperfect art are applying academic criticism, of which the mark is that it attends to art more than to substance, to little purpose: they lose that grip on life which keeps such criticism within bounds of good sense; the poem, whatever its faults, is an imperishable monument of that home-feeling, shown also in Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" and Whittier's "Snowbound," which is so profound an element in the character as well as the affections of English-speaking people the world over; the Christian home, whether Scotch, Irish or American, is the same substantially, and shines the more the more humble the home; the poem presents this, and remains, as it should be, more domestic than religious. After this "The Vision" should be read, the scene being the same, and the subject being what was more to Burns than religion, — his call to the poet's life. Opposed to these purer scenes of his own home in its noblest associations stand the satiric poems on the church and its congregation. There has never been so exposing and self-justifying satire in English; as a portrayal of manners and as a moral argument they are equally complete. The series includes "The Twa Herds," "The Holy Fair," "The Ordination," "Holy Willie's Prayer," "The Kirk's Alarm," "Address to the Deil," "Address to the Unco' Guid," "To the Rev. John M'Math"; and with these should be read the "Epistle to a Young Friend," "A Bard's Epitaph," "Epistle to James Smith," "Epistle to Davie," "Epistle to J. Lapraik," "Second Epistle to J. Lapraik," "Epistle to William Simpson," which sufficiently illustrate Burns' personal moods, both as poet and man. The character drawing, the general social scene, the argument, the observation of

life and reflection upon it are all easy to take in. These are all pure Scotch pieces and come out of the core of Burns' life. "Tam O'Shanter" should be read as narrative; but observe its vivid vision, speed and the variety of feelings excited by it as one reads. It is hardly excelled, except that its subject is slighter, by "The Jolly Beggars," which is the masterpiece of the pure Scotch poems; notable in this poem is the absence of any moral attitude toward its matter, the shameless unconsciousness of it, as of the beggars themselves, which must be reckoned an artistic triumph. Observe also its structure, and the union in it of Burns' two great powers — the song-power and the manners-drawing power, which give to it the force of all his capacity as a writer, except as a love-poet. The best of the pure Scotch poems, not already mentioned, are "Halloween," "Scotch Drink," "Poor Mailie's Elegy," "To a Louse," "Epistle to John Rankine," "Death and Doctor Hornbook," "A Poet's Welcome," "Adam Armour's Prayer," "Nature's Law," and the "Epistles."

The best songs are those of mingled imagination and passion with a personal touch, such as "Highland Mary," "Thou lingering star," "Of a' the airts, "Ae fond kiss," "Mary Morison," "O wert thou in the cauld blast," "Here's a health"; those of the same sort but more impersonal, such as "How lang and drearie," "The Banks of Doon," "A red, red rose," "Coming through the rye," "Saw ye bonie Leslie," "O this is no my ain lassie," "My Nanie, O"; those of universal appeal (not love-songs), such as "John Anderson," "Auld Lang Syne," "Scots wha hae," "Is there for honest poverty"; those of a lighter, careless cast, such as "O Whistle," "I'm o'er young," "Duncan Davison," "Duncan Gray," "Laddie, lie near

me," "Whistle o'er the lave of it," "The Rantin Dog," "O May, thy morn," "Corn Rigs," "Green grow the rashes"; those touched (but hardly touched) with romance, such as "M'Pherson's Farewell," "The Silver Tassie," "My heart's in the highlands," "It was a' for our rightfu' king"; the drinking songs, such as "Willie brew'd a peck o' maut," and others of like rollicking or mocking nature. These titles include nearly all the best lyrics, the characteristic and famous ones. Their qualities are too simple to require further remark. Notice the unity of each, its being all of a piece, in one tone of feeling; the atmosphere of landscape or of incident in some; the temperament prevailing in each, pathos, humor, raillery, gallantry, sentiment, all of a popular and common kind; the music sharing the spirit of each; and the simple directness of speech, just like natural quick prose, only conveying images and feelings as a rule, or if ideas, then ideas that glow with emotion; and especially notice the complete success of each in what it tries to do.

It is with some such counsel as this, however obtained, that the reader who is beginning acquaintance with English lyric poetry in the group named should be attended; or, if this be lacking, it is by such attention to many sides of his author that he should endeavor to open his eyes and to multiply his points of contact. A connection is to be made between life in the author and life in himself; the points of power in the one and the points of sensitiveness in the other must mutually find each other. It is only then that appreciation begins.

One of the liveliest pleasures of literary study in its inception is this rapid multiplication of the interest of life; to become aware of the variety of the surface of

life, to enter beneath the surfaces, to penetrate them and realize their significance. Among these new interests some special attention should be given to the artistic forms of the expression, to its modes of handling the theme, even so far as to make a slight analysis, if only to bring them more fully into clear consciousness. The forms of art are then seen to be not something arbitrary, but replicas of life itself. The play of emotion in the poet is not something artificial, nor idiosyncratic and peculiar to himself; in him as in others it follows the ordinary process of experience; but by his art he exhibits this play in forms of greater clarity, brilliance and beauty. For the purposes of brief illustration it will be sufficient to refer to well-known lyrics and to confine attention to those in which nature gives the base of the imagery by means of which the emotion is rendered. In Shelley's lines "The Recollection" there is a clear-cut example of the way in which a natural scene is handled to develop the climax of an emotional moment. In the first movement of the poem the landscape fills the entire field of interest as mere description, and is so rendered as to build up an atmosphere of solitude, silence and quiet peace with increasing effect, but without human suggestion, until the scene becomes intense and magnetic, and the mood reaches its height:

"There seemed, from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain waste
To the soft flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced,
A spirit interfused around,
A thrilling, silent life,—
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife;

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And still I felt the center of
The magic circle there
Was one fair form that filled with love
The lifeless atmosphere."

The mood arising out of these natural surroundings has so moved as to concentrate the whole living world on the figure of the lady suddenly disclosed, and to center the emotion of the scene in her presence so that she seems the source of all life that lives there. The climax of the natural scene in the feminine form is complete; the scene, in fact, radiates from her. In Shelley's verse of this kind the emotion which rises out of nature often returns to nature to find there its cessation and repose, and the cycle is then complete and parallels normal experience. In the "Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples" the example is very perfect, and it should be observed how definitely the successive stages of the mood, as it disengages itself from the scene and becomes purely personal and human, are held each within the limits of the stanza, and how the orderly development of the mood as it rises and falls away is accomplished by means of the stanzaic structure. The variations of the artistic process are infinite. In Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" the more common order is reversed; the poem begins with emotion already present and seeks union with nature as an end in itself; the soul, being already in a certain mood, seeks expression by union with the nightingale's song, seeks self-expression there, and when the song ceases the soul returns to itself and awakes from its dream. The contrast with the "Stanzas near Naples" is complete. Whereas in Shelley's poem nature is real and the emotion is the emerging dream from which the soul awakes returning to nature, in Keats' ode the emotion is real, and nature the

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dream from which the soul awakes returning to itself. Another interesting example, artistically, is Shelley's "Indian Serenade." Here the poem has a prelude in the dream world itself from which the lover awakes into a natural world that has all the characteristics of a dream, and thence beginning its emotional career, drops the night-scene and nature completely out of sight and lives only in the world of its own passionate desire.

Such are some of the examples of the nature lyric of the most poetic type. Less unified, but not less interesting, are those forms that employ the method of parallelism instead of evolution and set the natural scene beside the mind's thought, without losing it from view in the intense oblivion of emotion. Wordsworth's "Lines Written in Early Spring" follows this method, and Tennyson's "Break, break, break," is perhaps the finest example of it, setting forth the opposition of life continuing in all its activities in antithesis to the fact of death and personal loss. The same method and situation, but with a closer union of the scene with the sense of lost love, are in Burns' "Bonnie Doon." Still another variety of the type and one widely used, is the method of expanding the emotion by a rising enlargement of the imagery, seen in Burns' "My luve's like a red, red rose"; the passage from the symbol of the fresh-sprung rose and the simple tune to the vast imagery of the seas, and the earth's destruction, and distance to the world's end, is simply made, and by this speed with its splendid abandon the immensity of the poet's love is rendered. A curious instance of mingled parallelism between the natural scene and the emotional mood, with expansion through the imagery, is found in Tennyson's "Tears, idle tears"; there is in this poem a reverberation of emotion, as in instrumental

music, and this reverberation is really the poem, as may be known by the use of the refrain. The function of the refrain in verse is precisely to secure this reverberation of one chord of the mood continually rising up and dying, and rising again and dying away, so that the emotion rather than any particular image of the emotion shall fill the mind; for such poems, in which, moreover, the mere monotony of repetition deadens and hypnotizes the intellectual consciousness, are like music, — though floating images may attend the emotion they are subordinate to it; emotion, imageless emotion, is the end sought.

It will be observed that in the larger number of these examples the effect is one of sadness, and it must be acknowledged that sadness prevails in the lyric and in the lyrical temperament. Victorious emotion is sometimes the subject; but emotion is more often fruitless, as it is fleeting, and the sadness of the lyric mood results largely from the habitual experience in life of such unfulfilled or thwarted emotion, tending to repeat itself. All art requires repose as its end; and the principle of repose is as necessary in the lyric as elsewhere; but it is found usually in the exhaustion rather than the satisfaction of the emotion. On the scale of longer poetry, this repose is obtained by a prophetic touch. Thus in the great case of English elegy, Milton finds repose at the close of his lament for Lycidas, in the imagining of the Saints' paradise, and Tennyson in "In Memoriam" finds it in a pantheistic faith of the eternity of love in union with the living divine will, and Shelley finds it in "Adonais" in the hoped-for escape and near flight of his own soul into that world whither Adonais has gone and from which the soul of Keats "beacons" to him like a

star out of eternity; or, in a different field, Shelley finds repose for the passion of humanity in that millennium which he invents and sings in the fourth act of "Prometheus Unbound." In short lyrics, however, the repose is often a mere katharsis or relief, an exhaustion with peace following on the subsidence of the emotion, and theoretically in a complete lyric this point should be reached. It is reached in Burns' "Highland Mary" in the thought of her eternal presence in his memory; it is reached in Keats' "Nightingale" and in Shelley's Naples' poem; on the other hand it is often not reached, as in Shelley's "Indian Serenade," where the poem ends on a note of climbing passion, though the picture is of the exhausted and fainting lover. The type of the lyric that finds no repose — the type of desire in the broad sense, of all desire as such, is in the lines —

> "The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow —
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow!"

These are the last lines of the poem to which they belong — a poem ending on the climbing note. The mystery of human desire has found no purer expression than in these lines. Lyric poetry in general tells the fate of that desire through the wide range of its many forms, brief or extended, the love-song, the elegy, the choral ode, and if sometimes it sings songs of triumph like Miriam and epithalamiums of happy consummation like Spenser, yet more often its burden is of failure, of the thwarted life and the unfulfilled dream; and even in the grander forms of the drama and the epic, poetry, using the lyrical note and embodying the passion of man, sets forth the same lesson of the resurrection of that which springs

eternally futile in the human breast, — the double lesson of love's infinite despair and life's infinite hope.

This deep note of intense lyrical passion will be felt by the reader only in proportion to the richness and profundity of his own life and his capacity to be so moved. Such poetry gives itself, if at all, unsought, by virtue of its inner intimacy with the experience of the reader; appreciation of it is not arrived at by study, though study in the sense of attentive contemplation, of dwelling on the poem, may assist in finer appreciation of it. The larger part of brief verse, however, makes no such demand upon the reader; much of it, and much that is most useful, lies in the realm of the affections, of incident and action. The lyric naturally lends itself to the representation of dramatic moments and to the interpretation of character in vivid ways. It is thus that Browning habitually employs it. The lyric is limited in length according to the intensity of its feeling; the more intense, the more brief. This does not involve denying that a long poem may be essentially lyrical. Passion in life is, at times, a prolonged and varied experience, but in such a case it proceeds by moments of high feeling separated by periods of repose. It is for this reason that such experience is rendered by a succession of lyrics which in their sequence compose a complete poem. Tennyson's "In Memoriam" is thus built up of "swallow-flights of song"; his "Maud" is similarly constructed; Shakespeare's "Sonnets" afford another passionate example. It remains true that these poems and others like them make their impression rather by their detail than as a whole, and are remembered and enjoyed by their fragmentary parts, by special passages and units of the series; they are to be read in rather than to be read through, or if perused consecutively they are

seldom to be finished at one sitting. Only the hardened scholar can read an Elizabethan sonnet sequence without taking breath, and then with little pleasure. The lyric, however, lengthens naturally in the elegy such as "Adonais," in the tale such as "Marmion," and in a poem of meditation such as "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage"; and it takes on a high organic form in the dramatic sphere, though with aid from non-lyrical elements, of which the great example in English is Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound." It is by familiarity with its brief forms and a thorough appreciation of these that the rather exceptional power of enjoying and appropriating a long lyrical poem is gained. The better way of approach to lyrical poetry is by the use of anthologies, but preferably by anthologies of a single poet than by those which contain selections from many authors. It is seldom useful to read all the works of a poet at the start; the best writings of each have already been sifted out by consent, and are easily obtained by themselves; but in anthologies confined to one poet personality still binds the poems together, they reflect light one upon another, and by their inward similarities they enforce the peculiar traits of the poet, deepen the impression, and give an increasing power of appreciation along the lines of his special powers and sensibilities. If the poet is to be a favorite and to make an engrossing and almost private appeal to the reader, the acquaintance with the complete works will become a necessity and be self-enforced by the taste that has been formed; until then it can well wait. It is seldom that an anthology including many writers possesses any such unity. Palgrave's "Golden Treasury" is exceptional in this regard; it has the felicity of being an expression of the English genius in poetry, and of so containing an individuality,

with powers of mutual reflection of part to part and of an increment of significance to the whole, similar to that in one man's works. The "Greek Anthology" is likewise unified by racial genius. The criticism offered by Palgrave in his notes, which are usually neglected, is also singularly admirable, compact, clear, penetrating and governed by a just taste. It contains indeed in its small limits almost an education in poetic taste. A similarly remarkable aid for the lighter forms of verse, including guiding criticism and a characterization of the artistic form, is given by Frederick Lockyer in a final note to his own poems; it suffices of itself to direct the reader through the whole field. Such criticism as is afforded by these two writers, so modestly put forth as to be almost hidden, is very rare, and the reader should avail himself of it for cultivation and information. To apprehend the spirit of lyrical poetry Shelley's "Defence of Poetry" should be read; to understand some of its ends and means in practice Wordsworth's "Prefaces" are still the most useful declaration of its principles.

To these hints and suggestions as to the nature of lyrical poetry and the modes of approach to it a final counsel may be added. It unlocks emotion, and pours it in free and eloquent forms in an imaginary world; it teaches the wise and beautiful behavior of the soul in its emotional life. The scene is imaginary, but the emotion is real; and it may be more than a sympathetic emotion; it may so repeat the reader's experience and express his actual self as to be personal and his own as if he had written the poem. This is the test of success with the reader, that he shall seem to have written the book. If, however, the emotion remains only sympathetic, it opens to the reader the large passion of the world's life, the

hopes and fears of his kind and the modes of man's consolation. It is thus that he becomes humanized, and adds to his own life the life which is that of man. Emotion so felt may not necessarily result directly in action; but it results in character; it softens, refines and ennobles the soul, and it illuminates life for the intellect. In that self-development which every live spirit seeks, the power of emotion is a main part of the capacity to live and know and understand. In the private experience of a cultivated man the imaginary life, lived in art and dream and the stirring of the thousand susceptibilities of his nature that never pass from his consciousness outward but are shut in his own silent world, is a large part of reality to him, in the strict sense, — it is his larger life, the life of the soul. Lyrical poetry holds its high place by virtue of its power to nourish such a life.

CHAPTER III

NARRATIVE POETRY

THE second great division of experience is action; it is rendered in the ideal forms of literary art most purely by the epic and the drama; in the first the action is related, in the second it is represented. It is not necessary for the beginner to enter upon the esthetic theory of these two modes of literature; his business is rather to make an acquaintance with the books, to have a first view of their contents, than to analyze their philosophic structure. Epic and drama, too, are only the highest forms of the literature of action; narrative poetry includes much that can hardly be characterized as epic, and it is convenient to treat under this head poetry which is not strictly a narration of action, but which describes or sets forth experience at length, such as Virgil's "Georgics," Lucretius, or the long poems of Wordsworth. The most easy introduction to narrative poetry in English is by means of Scott's tales in verse, romantic in atmosphere, gallant in action and swift in movement; their objective realism, similar to that of man's earliest poetry, is a point of great advantage, and assists immediate appreciation by simple and untrained minds. Byron's "Tales" which naturally follow are more full of adventure and passion, melodramatic, and as they in their time outrivaled and silenced Scott's saner genius, they still in the reading are more effective in rousing and exciting the mind; but Scott's

tales have shown the more enduring quality, possibly, after all, and are more widely popular. If there be in the reader any capacity to be stirred by romantic narrative, these two poets will bring it forth without fail; and the entrance on the path once being made, the way onward has an open career by many issues. Concurrently with the tale of adventure the romantic life of nature may well be approached as it is set forth, for example, in Longfellow's "Hiawatha," which appeals to simple poetic tastes requiring a high degree of objective reality in a poem. It is a poem in which nature is so romantically presented as to become almost a fresh creation of the wilderness and a renewal of primitive life; it gives great pleasure to the young and is an admirable approach to the poetical view of nature which in modern English verse is so fundamental, engrossing and various in its results.

Though it is not commonly thought to be the case, it is likely that the longer poems of Wordsworth, "The Prelude" and "The Excursion," are more available in developing this point of view and habit of mind than is supposed. Wordsworth is usually a favorite poet with young students, and he especially appeals to the quieter and self-commanded temperaments, to whom the abandon of intenser masters is unnatural; his moods are more even with life, his message is plain, and in all ways he is a most accessible poet to those less poetically inclined. "The Prelude" and "The Excursion" are regarded as tedious poems, and to have read them is commonly considered a victorious trial of the spirit. I frankly confess to wishing that they were longer than they are. The two poems together present the poetic history of an extraordinarily sensitive and masculine mind, and such an autobiography of a poet's introduction to life may well be

full of useful lights on the things of the poetic life, especially for the reader who is himself just entering on that life and who realizes that it is indeed a life and not merely a study that he is entering on. These poems contain a fund of great truths relating to that life nowhere else so well coördinated and set forth in coherency with life's whole.

Preëminent among these traits is that of the function of nature in giving a scale to life, some sort of perspective in which man may take a relative measure of himself and of his mortal career. In the mere massiveness of nature, in the comparative eternity of her life in the elements of air, earth and ocean, in the impressive tumult and the no less impressive peace of her changing moods from day to day, in the vast power and certainty of her life-processes in sunlight, the succession of the seasons and the phenomena of the death and birth of things in multitude of being, — in all this there is the sense of that infinite in opposition to which man recognizes his own finitude. One who lives in comparative solitude, like the dalesmen whom Wordsworth knew, always in the presence of nature, has close at hand an unceasing correction of that egotism that grows up in cities, — in the sphere, that is, where human energies seem to occupy the scene, and the ambitions and worldly aims of men seem to be all in all. Napoleon, absorbed in the spectacle and mastery of merely human things, there where human qualities of intelligence, force and strategy count for most, may seem even to himself a kind of demigod whom life obeys; but the dalesman, constantly in the sight of the hills and streams and their tempests, constantly aware of the conditioning might of nature in harvest and herds, constantly open to the inflowing on his soul of the mysterious

agencies of cloud and sunshine, of darkness and peril, and of the various beneficence as well as of the hard rebuffs of nature, retains the true sane sense of humanity as a creature. So Wordsworth presents the case, in describing the advantage of the countryman over the dweller in cities, and of a life led in alliance with nature over the life of the market and the court. The idea is not unlike that belonging to Greek tragedy. The spectacle of tragedy in the lives of kings and princes and favorites of the gods, which was the sort that the Greek stage habitually presented, was believed to be wholesome for the ordinary body of spectators, because they thereby found a scale of misfortune so much exceeding anything in their own lives that their mishaps appeared not only more bearable but really of slight importance. In comparison with the woes of Agamemnon or Œdipus, their own lives were felicity. In the same way, if one has the scale of nature in continual sight, he lives with the infinite of power and the infinite of repose close to him, and he is thereby kept humble in thought, and an anodyne of peace steals into his soul to quiet, to console and heal. Nature thus first dilates the mind with her own spectacle, gives to it touches of her own infinitude, and yet preserves the mind's humility at the very moment that it adds to the mind's majesty in living; and next it tranquilizes the soul in mortal grief. In its most common form, then, and for all, even unlettered men, nature is the familiar presence of the infinite; and those who live in its presence truly find at once and without effort, find in boyhood and youth in an unconscious process, that scale of the infinite for their lives, which the soul needs in order to be truly born. This is the doctrine which is elaborated in the "Prelude" and illustrated in the "Excursion," permeating

both poems; and it is presented both externally in the lives of the dalesmen, and personally as the life of Wordsworth's dawning mind. If the doctrine be well apprehended, it is of itself a large preparation for the poetic life which lies in the appreciation of modern poetry, so far as the description and interpretation of nature enter into it; and in all its narrative poetry this is a large element.

Narrative poetry, such as that of Scott, Byron and Wordsworth, is found in great profusion in literature and is of every degree of merit. It does not differ in its kind of interest from the record of similar experience or reflection upon experience in prose, and much of it indeed is a survival in a late age of the habits of that early period when, prose not having been developed, poetry was the normal mode of all literary composition. That is one reason why so large a part of narrative poetry is quickly dead. The poetic form gives condensation, speed and brilliancy to narrative, but in general the narrative succeeds in proportion to its brevity. It requires a master of narrative like Chaucer to maintain interest in poetic fiction; and as a rule, narrative poems, owing to the difficulty of sustaining emotional interest for a prolonged time, are remembered by their glowing, picturesque and romantic passages. The breaking up of long poems into books and cantos, or into single adventures separately treated as by Tennyson, is a device to avoid this difficulty. In prose the telling of a story as such is more facile and generally more effective; if a modern narrative in verse succeeds, it is by virtue of something besides the story. The literature of all nations is strewn with the stranded wrecks of poetic narratives, from the times of Greece through the interminable garrulity of the middle ages and

the spawning epics of the south of Europe down to the days of Southey. In its rivalry with prose, poetic narrative succeeds only by emotional intensity, as in Keats, or by some romance in the tale favored by grace in the telling.

The truth is that poetic narrative in its great examples, those that are supreme works of the race, is much more than simple narration of an action, description of a scene, or meditation upon a theme. The epic exceeds these lesser poems by virtue of being a summary of times past, of civilizations entire, of phases of man's long abiding moods of contemplating life; the epic contains the genius of the race that produces it, and is the attempt of that race to realize its dream of what it has been, is and shall be, not in any practical achievement in the real world but in its own consciousness of its ideals. They belong to the most impersonal of man's works; they are social poems, condensations of broad human life into which centuries are compressed, landmarks of the progress of the race through change. If the poet individually writes them, they are no less the combination of ages of tradition, its product and embodiment. In the earlier examples the tradition is national; in Homer and Virgil, it is Greek and Roman genius that are treasured up; but in later writers it is rather the tradition of the civilization to which they belong than the pure national tradition that is expressed. In English the great examples are three, Spenser's "Faëry Queene," Milton's "Paradise Lost" and Tennyson's "Idyls of the King." The first and second are poems of the Renaissance spirit, and involve, one the tradition of chivalry and the middle age, the other that of Christian story and antiquity, while Tennyson resumes the Arthurian legend. It is obvious that such poems re-

quire in the reader much preparation by study before they can be intelligently read; for such reading there must be a knowledge of Scripture, mythology and chivalry in particular, but also much besides. These poems are, in truth, the most fascinating form of history, and perhaps its most efficient form; and as the English kings are most humanly known in Shakespeare, past history in general is most alive in the epics that sum it up imaginatively and interpret it in terms of the immortal spirit of man. Actual history, life as it was, is to this reincarnation of it in poetry merely dead annals; like the excavated ruins of Troy, in comparison with the Iliad, — a desolation, debris, a thing of the gray annihilation of time. The power of historical imagination is, therefore, indispensable to the reader, whose assimilation of the poem will be proportionate to his exercise of it. For each of the great epics there is a stock of interpretative and illustrative criticism easily accessible and admirably ordered; but after all aids have done their utmost, the reader is still keenly aware of the dividing power of time which corrodes and effaces the material of the poem, impairs sympathy and not seldom transforms its original charm into charm of another sort which, however attractive, he knows to be different. This difficulty of complete comprehension is greater as he approaches foreign epics and those of antiquity. Tasso is, perhaps, most nigh with his "Jerusalem Delivered"; for Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso" a special culture is necessary; and Camöens, in his "Lusiads," is perhaps the most unseizable of the moderns. Dante's "Divine Comedy" requires prolonged study; Lowell said, somewhat hyperbolically, that the thirteenth century existed to annotate this poem, but by the phrase he conveyed a truth and indicated the immense

significance of the poem. Notwithstanding their distance in time, Virgil and Homer still remain near to the classically educated reader, one by virtue of his temperament, the other by his reality; both, besides their powerful historical interpretation of race, engage human interest deeply in romantic forms. The epics, in their true significance, are only for strong minds. They afford, however, the best introduction to a foreign literature or to that of a past stage of culture. They involve such an illumination of the period and yield such an insight into the racial qualities and career of the peoples whose ideals they summarize that the entire literature of those nations in other forms becomes intelligible, capable of appreciation, provocative of sympathy to as high a degree as it is possible to reach. It is seldom that a foreigner ever appreciates literature as a native, owing to the barriers of language and the difference in heredity, education and race genius; but it is in the epics, which have indeed a more cosmopolitan character than other forms of literature through the community of their literary tradition, that the genius of a nation or the spirit of a long age is most thoroughly and deeply felt and perceived. No literary study is on the whole more fruitful in broadening the mind and sympathies by forcing them to range widely in the history of the human spirit and to observe its modes in distant times and contrasted ages and in nations of high achievement. It is through them that the conception of world-literature, as opposed to special literatures, most readily begins to form.

The epic even in its greatest examples does not escape from the general difficulty of narrative poetry in sustaining interest for a long time. Homer nods, and his successors inherited the weakness with the art. Every device

has, nevertheless, been availed of to avoid such defects of tediousness or of waning interest. The art of narrative is carried to its highest point in the manner of presenting the story, of displaying the characters, of interweaving episodes, of varying the matter, contrasting it, heightening it; and one result is that the epics are remembered by their eloquent passages, their dramatic moments, their episodes, and their highly finished parts rather than as wholes; it is, perhaps, only by the scholar that the effect of the work as a whole is felt and its unities recognized. In writing it each new poet has availed himself of all that has gone before, and has freely imitated, incorporated and rewritten the work of his predecessors, so that the art gained cumulative power in a remarkable measure, and this not only by the use of old modes and resources but by an appropriation of the substance itself by means of translation or imitation that was equivalent to direct copy though often accompanied by improvement. The epics have a family resemblance, and show their descent by their features. It is instructive to notice also, in their succession, how they reflect the growth of civilization by their increasing social complexity, the softening of their manners, the development of the element of love in contrast to war, the changes in their divine scheme, the refinement in moral ideals, and, in general, the inwardness of the life they set forth in proportion as the world ripens in time at the season of their coming. No part of literature reflects so clearly and continuously the gradual spiritualization of human life in the evolution of our Western civilization. It is not, however, its narrative art, its brilliant passages, its record of social and spiritual progress, and still less is it the mere tale of love and war in their individual accidents, that have gained for the

epics the high esteem, and indeed veneration, in which they are held. This proceeds from the fact that the epic poets knew how to set forth the tale so that it should be a tissue of that symbolical truth which is the stuff of all great literature, and so to present the story of a great design, like the siege of Troy or the founding of Rome, or of a great event like the fall of man, or of a great adventure like that of Spenser's knights or Camöens' sailors, in such a way that while true in its individual traits it should also represent and express the fates of human life in general as they were seen and known; they told a tale, not of men's lives, but of man's life, and of man's life at its highest energy, luster and endurance, its utmost power of life. Achilles was such a man as every Greek would wish to be in action, and the tale was of what was possible to such a man, for triumph and for sorrow, in life as the Greek knew it. The breadth of interpretation achieved, such that the poem was the expression of a race, an age, a great mood of life acting and suffering, was the measure of its catholic power to express life, to define its fortunes, to unload its burdens, to declare its meaning. This is ideal truth, as poetic art knows it, written large.

One does not go far in literature in any direction without coming into deep waters, — a fact that the study of the epic quickly reveals. Without entering upon esthetic theory in detail or developing the philosophical interest of the epic fully, it is of use to glance at the moral significance of epic poetry in which so much of its power lies. The epic is a high organic form of art, and this form is realized with different degrees of fullness and clearness in different examples. It is grounded on the operation of the will, which is the source of action; and in the epic form it is the social will that is contemplated, organized

in the life of nations. The epic centers about a collision which takes place in the social sphere rather than in that of personal life, and it has an historical basis or one that is accepted as historical. The conflict is between opposed nations or races, in which different ideas of civilization challenge each other to deadly encounter. It is sometimes stated that these are opposed, as a higher to a lower civilization, a higher to a lower will; and as the will of the social group is always interpreted by the members of that group as being the will of its ruling and providential gods, it is often represented that in the epic the divine will is involved, and adds its power of victory to the winning arms, overthrowing the lower will of a barbarous and profane foe. Thus the conflict of Greece with Troy, of the fates of Rome with the Carthaginian and the Italian, of the arms of the Crusaders with the Saracen, of the genius of Portugal with the Moslem, of the soul with sense in Spenser's and in Tennyson's knights, of Satan with the Omnipotent in Milton's legend of creation, — all these involve the divine will in one or another mode of its manifestation through human fortunes. In the "Iliad" it is natural to think of the Greeks as the embodiment of the higher civilization and the defenders of the better cause; in the "Æneid," as the mind looks back on the vast beneficence of Rome as the unifier and legislator of the Mediterranean world and the civilizer of the barbarous North, it is likewise natural to regard the fortunes of Æneas as the fates of the future, and the triumph of Rome over all peoples, as the victory of that Providence which was then known as the divine will of Jupiter, the Olympian; in the Christian epics a like view is less a preconception of our minds than a part of our idea of the world. Optimism, the final victory of the

best, would seem to belong to the epic and to be contained in its very idea.

Yet, as in lyrical poetry the prevailing tone is of sadness, so in the epic the story is one of the sorrows of mankind. Tragedy stamps them from the first line of the "Iliad" to the farewell of the dying Arthur. It is obvious at once that in all epics the side that loses finds its career one of pure tragedy, and in its fall bears always deeply graved the tragic mark of fatality. The defeat of the Trojans, the defeat of Turnus, the defeat of any beaten cause has this trait in a marked form, and this is the more clearly felt in proportion as the fatality embodied in the new power of the victors is also represented as the working of the divine will adding its supreme might to that power. The issue for the conquered is not merely defeat, but the tragic issue of death, complete extinction, the funeral pyre of Hector, the ashes of Troy. The principle of repose invoked to complete the work of art is that of tragic repose, death. The tragic mark also appears in the apparent injustice done to a noble nature, for it is not felt that Hector deserves his fate; he is a victim of the adverse gods, the same that Turnus feared in his last mortal struggle. Nor is the tragic note confined to the beaten cause. In the victorious cause tragedy has a large field all its own. The price of the victory of the divine will, or of the higher civilization, is in all these great poems a tragic price, and is the more plainly and openly so in proportion to the height of the poem. In this impression the epic faithfully repeats that historic experience which it records and idealizes; it is grounded, as all poetry is, in life; and, still, as we mark the doomed nations and races going into extinction, see them pressed westward to the seas and decimated and engulfed, it is

little joy to the mind to contemplate the victory of the will of civilization thus enforced by battle-axe and cannon over the weaker and less fortunate tribes of men. Sacrifice is a word writ large in the epical life, — sacrifice of both victor and vanquished. It is obvious that the optimism of the epic lies in the efficacy of the sacrifice, that is, in the validity of the idea of social progress.

As the epic enters the religious sphere, it develops its central conceptions of human life most remarkably. Here it unfolds the most tragic situation that it has been given to man to conceive. It is nothing less than the notion that in the confused field of human action there is a supreme and fatal collision between the human will as such and the divine will in omnipotence. At all times, even in the barbaric past, there have been what men thought of as collisions between men and the gods, — there have been blasphemy and sacrilege; but the reason, which finds its career in generalization, has here, if anywhere, carried its generalizing power to the madness of extremes, and evolved the theory that not men, but man, not individuals of exceptional wickedness but the race, is in opposition to God by virtue of the human will in its essence being in conflict with the divine will, and this doctrine is summed up in the notion of original sin. In this idea the tragic element is present in all its phases; tragedy is complete. Fate, or necessity, constrains the victim by his own nature which is already born into this collision and finds the struggle predetermined; overwhelming defeat accompanies the struggle; and the end, the tragic repose, comes, not only in mortal death, but in that extinction of the will itself which is involved in the conception of damnation. This is the essential, the spiritual tragedy of mankind, looked at from the darker

side. On the other hand the principle of sacrifice is invoked in order to secure alleviation of this situation; but the sacrifice is the highest conceivable, consisting in the suffering and temporary defeat of the Divine itself, in the scheme of salvation; and even under the operation of this sacrifice there remains, as in all epic, the tragic destruction of the beaten cause and its adherents in hell. These ideas are set forth in poetry in two great examples. In Milton the fable is fully constructed; on the side of the history of the human will it is fully developed in "Paradise Lost," and on the side of the Divine will partially developed in the "Paradise Regained." In Dante's "Divine Comedy," though the matter is not there presented in the form of action but in a symbolical picture of the results in the after world of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, the substance of the situation is the same; here is the fifth act of the spiritual tragedy in which the moment of repose must come, and it is found in two forms, the death of the wicked, which is a tragic issue without relief, and the salvation of the blessed, which is the victory of the higher will through sacrifice, manifested in the direction of longer and fuller life, — a strictly epic issue. It is plainly only a tempered optimism that the epic permits to the reflective man.

Such are some of the directions in which the mind makes out, if it would grasp the profounder significance of epical poetry; it may rest in the pleasure of contemplating the march of great events, the display of great character in action, the play of individual adventure and the many forms of imaginative delight that the epic utilizes to enrich and relieve its graver matter, but the greater the mental power of the reader the more he will endeavor to comprehend the profounder contents of the

epic in its meditation on human fate, on the operation of the will, not in individuals merely but in society, or the view of history which it inculcates. History, indeed, holds the same relation to it that biography does to lyrical verse. The reader of the lyric comes to love the author, to desire to know his life and to become, in a sense, his comrade, because he feels that the poems are, after all, only fragments of the man and that they, or the spirit they express, are integrated in the poet's own nature, the poet's soul. In the heart of the poet he finds at last the song. In a like way life on the large social scale, history, lies back of epical verse, but not history in any narrow sense of politics, institutions, manners; it is life as it has been broadly lived in the past, inclusive of all that entered into it, Greek life, Roman life, the life of the Renaissance, that must be more fully resuscitated in the mind before the epics give up their treasure. Such study belongs to the enthusiast, perhaps, to the reader who finds in literature the greater part of his mental life; in general he must content himself with something far short of this, and be confined to the immediate pleasure of the obvious part of the poem, its events, characters, and situations. Epic poetry is rich in such pleasure because it is seldom attempted except by great masters of the poetic art who are accustomed to give such high finish to their work as lesser men can afford only to short attempts. Virgil, Tennyson and Milton exhausted art in giving beauty to every line and phrase, to every incident, episode, picture by itself. The surface of their poetry is perfect and brilliant as with a mosaic incrustation of color, scene, and divine glow of art like that of the builders of Italy. In the contemplation of this resides the pure poetic pleasure undisturbed by philosophy and unshadowed by remoter

thought. It is thus that the epics should be first known and appropriated by their direct objective beauty in detail, as a vision of human experience in the large; the rest will come later, if at all, and unless the philosophic interest is roused in the reader so as to become a commanding need, it may be spared, for above all things poetic appreciation should have spontaneity.

Other forms of narrative poetry are best read in the same way with a preliminary attention to beauty of detail, to simple scenes and passages that of themselves attract and hold the reader. The poetic value of the "Georgics" or of Lucretius is thus most readily found, and the way opened to the appreciation of the poems in their entirety. Into the perception of the wholeness of a great poem, even of moderate length, so many elements enter, and for the most part the habit of the mind in artistic appreciation is so imperfect and unfamiliar, that it is not to be expected that the reader should arrive at facility in such understanding except slowly and by much practice. The idyl, of which the great English masters are Milton and Tennyson, perhaps best trains the mind in the appreciation of beauty in detail and the understanding of that glowing surface of color and picture which is the poetic method of the greatest masters, those who have had most patience with their art. These exquisite scenes of the idyls, each wrought out with the fineness of a cameo and linked one with another so subtly that the passing of the eye from one to the next is hardly marked, are triumphs of expression; if the reader has the sense of beauty, they educate it with great rapidity, and they accustom him to that slow reading which is necessary in poetry in order to give time for the contemplation of the scene to have its effect on the mind. Tennyson's idyls

were the principal education of his generation in the sense of beauty in life, and the vogue of his method and melody through the English world indicates the lack, almost the void, that it supplied, though Landor and Keats were before him and Milton survived as the best English master of the method. It is essentially the classic method, the Greek tradition. The reader once brought to true delight in the idyl finds the way to pastoral poetry open and soon adapts himself to the conventions of that world, so remote from actuality, where the dream of life as it might be fills the scene and human experience is freed from its discordant elements and poetry becomes more like picture and statue and music than in any other part of its domain. This Arcadian world, which is the most insubstantial part of poetry to the English reader, is by its spirit rather a division of lyrical than of narrative poetry; but it presents a vision of life and is descriptive of a realm of imagination, and it is characteristically a telling of life, though by a singing voice, as in Theocritus, Virgil and the Italians. Pastoral poetry is a highly refined form of the art, and the taste for it indicates that the education of the reader approaches completion in so far as his induction into its forms is concerned. But the nature of narrative poetry in its various phases has been sufficiently opened; in general, as lyrical poetry develops personality through emotion, narrative verse displays the various scene of the world, society in action, the breadth of experience, and develops social power, knowledge and a many-sided touch with life. It is the vision of life, and presents experience extensively rather than intensively, with objective reality; it provokes thought and initiates the individual into the world life of man both historically and ideally.

CHAPTER IV

DRAMATIC POETRY

THE drama has many claims to be regarded as the highest form of literary art. It deals with the material of human experience immediately, giving bodily form to life; even all that is invisible, belonging in the unseen world of inward experience, and all that is ineffable in passion, is presented at least as plainly as in the life itself by the intervention of speech, gesture and the visible presence of the event. The form of art, too, employed by the drama is highly organic; reason enters into it with stern insistence, and intellectualizes the life set forth, relating one part to another with a rational end in view. Dramatic theory may be best illustrated by the example of tragedy. The essence of tragedy is a collision in the sphere of the will; the will strives to realize itself in action, and in the attempt collides with some obstacle. The action thus entered upon is fatally controlled, both as to its occasion and issue; in no part of literary art is the rule laid down so rigorously as here that the action shall be made up of a chain of events linked together by causal necessity. To uncover this chain and show its connection is the province of the reason. Every extraneous and unrelated element is cut away; all is simplified to the point that the spectator must be convinced that the result obtained in the issue was inevitable and could not possibly have been otherwise than it was. The power

which is invoked is fate; it is a power that clings to, weighs upon and drags down its prey, be he never so strong and noble; it is a manifestation of the unsearchable law of human destiny. This is tragedy as it was first conceived and practiced by the Greek genius, and it remains unchanged in its essential conception. The discords that arise in life are infinite in variety, and the kinds of tragic conflict as various as the combinations of the will with life. The simplest collision is with external circumstance; the most complex is that when the will is internally divided against itself by some fact of character; and the two forms may be combined in the same play. The working of fate in the play may be attended with all degrees of interpretation from clearness to mystery; it is most clear when it is ethical, it is most mysterious when it transcends any scheme of justice known to men. Fate into which a retributory element enters, pursuing a sin-stricken house like that of Atreus, is intelligible to the conscience; but tragedy is not restrained within these limits in art any more than in life, and fate in proportion as it sinks into facts of circumstance, such as heredity, and blends with a generous nature such as Hamlet or Othello, becomes mysterious, a part of the unsolved spectacle of life. In its progress as an art tragedy seems to leave ethics behind and to become insoluble.

The Greek drama is the best introduction to the study of tragedy. It presents several points of advantage in inducting the reader into the nature of what is attempted, the point of view, the modes of evolving the action, the resources of the theatrical representation. In the first place, it is extraordinarily simple in its statement of the tragic problem, using plain elements in the tale, few char-

acters and well defined situations. The simplicity of Greek tragedies, indeed, strikes the modern reader as paucity; the action, the thought, the mental and moral substance of the play are almost skeletonized in their obviousness; and for the esthetic effect, it is evident, reliance was largely placed on the presentation with its open-air atmosphere, its sculpturesque grouping and its choral accompaniments. In the second place, the prepossession of the play with ethics is marked. The Greek genius undertook by a natural inclination to impose an ethical meaning on life as known in the legend of the race; it would find moral harmony in the dealings of the divine with mankind, and beginning with Æschylus it exalted the conception of righteousness as an element in fatality, and ending with Euripides it was still concerned with the moral aspect of human affairs. Aristotle reduced the practice of the dramatists to a theory, and simply excluded from the art all such representation as could not be rationalized for the conscience, on the ground that such representations would be impiety to the gods. The ethical school of criticism of the drama still rests substantially on these prepossessions, inherited from the Greeks, which presumed a law of righteousness manifest in the tragedies that befall mankind. The Greek drama is also convenient for study because it exemplifies with great lucidity and speed in development the evolution of the art, not only in its emergence from its early state as a choral act of religion into a more theatrical representation of individuals and their relations, but also in its movement from a rough and broad typical treatment, as in Æschylus, through the perfect balance of Sophocles to the extreme individualization of Euripides; in these dramatists the normal evolution of every fine art is illus-

trated by the example of tragedy passing from a lofty and abstract idealism to the various forms of realism and romanticism. Besides these three marked traits of simplicity, ethical quality, and artistic development, the Greek drama is also distinguished by great interest inherent in itself. The subjects were narrowly limited by tradition to the group of legends and tales that contained the religious and historic imagination of the race already embodied in great events and surpassing characters; the action is consequently always one that has distinction in itself, and the playing of the dramatist's thought about the action was the point of novelty in each new representation; the drama is thus a great text freshly commented upon and interpreted by the contemporary spirit of Greece in the person of her best masters of poetic genius. It is true that the external part of life, the action, holds the first place in interest, and this is a part of the native simplicity of Greek drama; it is primarily events that are to be set forth; the purpose of the poet is to draw forth their law as intelligible to the conscience. The character interest is different from that of modern tragedy, and seldom admits of that special trait of internal development which belongs predominantly to later art. But the characters, though fixed, are equal to the events in which their fortunes are engaged, worthy of them, and surpassing in human interest. Their mere names have served for ages as types both of human nature and of tragic destiny. Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, Antigone, Orestes, Medea, Hippolytus, and a score of others make a list that, if Shakespeare be excepted, no other literature is able to approach in definite and powerful impressiveness; they are for the imagination what Plutarch's men are for history, a gallery without a

rival. It is also true that Greek tragedy, if it be thoroughly read, presents a greater variety of interest for romantic pleasure as well as for intellectual activity than is commonly thought; its poetic riches, as Milton well knew, are untold; there is, indeed, no single body of literature comparable to it even when read, as there was never its equal for blended esthetic pleasures when acted under the pure skies of Athens.

For the English reader, nevertheless, the natural way to appreciate dramatic poetry is to read Shakespeare. He is one of those authors so greatly assimilative, so like to life itself, that no preparation is needed to read him beyond mere living from the time that boyhood awakes to life. It is always wise to approach literature by reading one author much rather than many authors a little; and to read Shakespeare thoroughly so shapes and informs the mind that no part of imaginative literature will thereafter be dark to it. If it be impossible to assign him such a place in English education as Homer filled in Greece, his works are nevertheless a sort of secular Bible for English-speaking peoples, and express the English apprehension of life in the large both in the way of ideal types of character, of romantic or profound courses of events and of practical wisdom formulated in pregnant phrase. To know Shakespeare well is to have sufficient depth in literary education though not sufficient range, since he was of his age as well as for all time. Such an education requires to be supplemented; yet in the English drama it is well-nigh exhaustive. At the first glance it is apparent that with Shakespeare the Greek drama has been left far behind. It is not characteristic of Shakespeare to be either simple or ethical. He had, back of his dramas, for subject-matter English and Roman history

and the romance tales of the continent; this body of tradition was not comparable to Greek legend in having been subjected to the rationalizing power of the imagination through long time, and it consequently was more miscellaneous, inchoate and undigested, mixed of heterogeneous and incompatible elements, less pure as material for the creative reason that genius exercises. Shakespeare, too, was himself less penetrated with the Greek instinct for ethical order, for harmony, in life; he was of a northern stock, and what to a Greek would have seemed barbaric habits of mind were still implicit in his nature, in his thought and feeling. The world, besides, had long broken old molds of ethical theory, and in expanding had included new experience of manifold variety. Life as it came to Shakespeare's knowledge was a greater and subtler thing than it had been in antiquity; it was full of new and unmeasured elements; it did not suggest harmony, it did not enforce on the mind any ethical law controlling its phenomena, it offered rather at the best an opportunity for moral exploration and mental experiment. These are some of the reasons why Shakespeare's plays cannot be described as ethical in the old and severe sense; they display ethical meaning only partially and often ignore that side of life; they are supremely concerned only with the representation of life, however confused and mysterious a phase it may wear to the moral judgment.

The reader must therefore be prepared to abandon that strict idea of tragedy as the rationalization of life under an ethical conception, and often to accept it here as the spectacle of mere fate, the law of human destiny manifest in examples, but seen rather than understood. The laxer hold of any informing rational principle in the play, this free movement of life in it, this grasp of the problem

without eliminating insoluble elements belongs to Shakespeare, and is a part of the breadth and comprehensiveness of his method. It is because of this, together with other cognate qualities, that critics often speak of his genius as being half-barbaric. He includes much more than art would include, nor is he careful to attend to the necessities of art; he created with his whole power of man rather than by any special faculty in a piecemeal way, and hence his work departs from art but it always departs in the direction of more life. To familiarize the mind with his habits, it is best to follow him in his growth from play to play, and so to grow with him into his practice, moods, and changes of interest, style and meditation; it is a richly developing life that will be so led. The histories, even those in which his hand is doubtful or partial, have the good of introducing one to the Elizabethan theater and accustoming the reader to its conventions, its kinds of interest, its atmosphere; and with "Richard II," "Richard III," "Henry V," "King John," Shakespeare already begins to be greatly known; the other plays follow in their order, the romantic comedies, the tragedies and Roman plays, the romances, as they were chronologically written; and as each one is mastered and understood, so far as the reader at the time can appropriate it, the nature of Shakespeare's art and the power of his genius will open, and the wide meaning of the plays, which are a blended product of both art and genius, will be more fully comprehended. One should read the plays, and not indulge too fondly in the comment. If one is led on to further study and meditation, the Variorum edition of Furness offers every needed facility and is library enough; with Shakespeare, never forget, "the play's the thing." The question of periods, the Eliza-

bethan vocabulary, stage history, may take care of themselves for the time being; so may the sources of the plots and analysis of the characters; so may the symbolical interpretation of both; life is not long enough to read Shakespeare in that way, if one has other business; but a man, even much occupied with many affairs, may read all Shakespeare's plays thoroughly and intelligently with true appreciation, and acquire an excellent literary education thereby.

Shakespeare suffices singly so much more than other authors because he includes within the work of one personality so extraordinary a range of dramatic art. The Greek drama in comparison with the Shakespearian is as the beautiful but confined Mediterranean world to the world of the world navigators. He adds to tragedy the province of comedy, but the expansion of the field is much more than that; he so treats the story that is the nucleus of the play as to make it a theme of life as various as it is universal. He presents many kinds of life, environments, atmospheres, without ceasing to be great in the treatment of them; in reading him one is not confined to history or tragedy or comedy or pastoral or any mode of life or art, but may pass from one to the other and still remain under the sway of one power; in other words, life here retains its individuality, its being one life, without losing its diversity of scene, business, and function. Humanity is, in a sense, harmonized by being thus held within the limits of his temperament. In no dramatist is there so large a geography of the world of the mind. It is true that his Athens is not the city of Theseus nor his Rome the city of Coriolanus or of Cæsar, nor England the England of Lear nor Scotland the Scotland of Macbeth; yet each is in turn really Athenian, Roman, British,

and Scotch, and gives a true illusion of historic phases of life each at one with itself; and, besides, there are the fairy world, the witches, the dream world of "The Tempest," the world of Arden, of Venice and Verona, each yielding a true illusion of imaginative phases of life similarly at harmony within its own domain. The expansion given to life by the revelation of each new play comes with the effect of mental and imaginative discovery; it is an invigorating shock and adds new horizons to the reader's consciousness of life. If it is a chief end of literary study to reveal new interests in life, to multiply the points of contact between the mind and human experience, to open out new ways of thought and feeling, Shakespeare serves this end with a stimulation, an abundance and surprise, and with a perfection in surrendering the new world into the hands and comprehension of the reader, entirely beyond comparison with others. It is, however, not so much by the extent, variety and freshness of the worlds of life which he evokes that he informs and shapes the mind and gives it great horizons, as it is by the free play of life in its element which he uncovers in the action and the characters, whether it be tragic or mirthful, in the lofty or the low persons of the drama, flushed with passion, crossed with melancholy or salt with cynicism, — whatever it be, it is life in its own element and unconfined. Fate rules in it, and most plainly in the greatest dramatic moments, but it is Shakespeare's fate, the unsearchable law of human destiny that escapes moral statement and is more largely if more blindly conceived than in old days. In "Lear" and its attendant great tragedies, pity and terror, the tragic motives, are at their height partly because of the paralysis of the reason in view of the spectacle; the moral order has vanished and

gone forever, and no power of art can bring it back by skill in the solution of the action. Fate such as this makes the greatness of the passionate plays, and in lesser forms it is present in all as the spirit abiding in life that has its will in the end, the genius of the play. Shakespeare never loses touch with this mystic element in life, and he is fond of putting it forth as an enchantment, especially in the happier phases of his art; the ways in which life escapes understanding are in no author so large a part of the substance, the charm, one may almost say the meaning. It is thus that his art transcends Greek art, and incarnates the modern spirit. Though his art would be described by its traits as belonging to the Renaissance, the modern spirit was born there like Athene from the head of Zeus. No other author gives forth that spirit with like power and light, illuminating the self-consciousness of humanity, its realization of human nature and human life. To read Shakespeare is not, as is sometimes said, to feudalize the imagination and befool the mind with aristocratic and dead ideals; but to be myriad-minded, like Shakespeare, is to be modern-minded, ever to comprehend and interpret more of life with an increasing sense of its insoluble elements, to live in a world of new discovery, of information, of revelation with suspense of judgment, to become more tolerant, more humane, with a serener view of the blended terror and enchantment of the scene, the golden days and doubtful fates of life, nowhere so romantically, passionately and wisely bodied forth as on Shakespeare's page. The way to read Shakespeare is to take the dramas which most attract and interest the reader and become thoroughly familiar with those, neglecting the others until their time shall come.

All other drama pales beside Shakespeare's. The revival of the Elizabethan drama that was an element in the romantic movement of the last century in England brought back into view the entire stage of that era and also its historic forerunners in English dramatic life. The pre-Shakespearians, nevertheless, have little intrinsic interest except of an historical kind; they live, even his great contemporaries live, largely by the reflected light of Shakespeare in the penumbra of his fame. Each has qualities of distinction, vigor, grace, charm, wit, picturesqueness, intellectual power, dramatic skill; some have one, some another of these traits; but in no one of them is the combination so happy or the work so excellent as to give their plays the quality that makes literature enduringly powerful as an expression of life in the ideal. Marlowe alone of the predecessors and Jonson alone of the contemporaries arouse other than a scholar's interest; such writers as Greene and Peele and Lodge are negligible; and the whole mass of moralities and miracle plays, though historically valuable, and often touched by a happy strain of human truth or picturesqueness, is as literature a thing of naught. The post-Shakespearians have greater literary skill, but they had lost in the wholeness of their grasp on life and present the traits of a decadence, even in Beaumont and Fletcher and more markedly in Webster and Ford. It is possible to become greatly interested in some one or other of the more famous plays, even to reach a degree of enthusiasm, but these are special experiences of the reader and depend much on temperament and accident. In general, Lamb's "Specimens" and what he said of them are sufficient to satisfy curiosity or open the way to experiment, and Lowell's lectures on these dramatists give all needful information

and show at the same time a diminishing interest in the writers which is the sign of a wise literary choice. The later history of English drama is comparatively barren ground. The Restoration drama is essentially prosaic and an expression of English genius the least admirable either for sound taste or fine feeling in English literary annals; it is only for the curious. The prose comedy of Congreve, and later of Goldsmith and Sheridan, is the best in the language, and should be read, as novels or essays are read, upon a lower level of interest than dramatic poetry. The choral dramas of Milton and Shelley open a new source and outflow of English genius in its noblest forms, but they are rather lyrical than dramatic. The nineteenth century produced no great drama in English, though occasionally, as in "Manfred," it gave forth a work of dramatic intensity, or as in some of Browning's poems it produced drama in a fragmentary form of romance and passion. On great lines, and for the reader who is not limited to dramatic interests, it remains true that Shakespeare, supplemented by a play here and there, suffices for dramatic reading, and after him Milton and Shelley, in their choral dramas, are the great masters in English of the truth that drama can put forth by poetic imagination.

The approach to foreign drama, except the Greek, is best made by the way of comedy, especially by Molière and Goldoni. Foreign tragedy, whether French, German, or Italian, is very remote from the reader. Spanish drama, a form intrinsically as interesting in many ways as the Greek and the Shakespearian and making with them a third definite form of this art in its supreme practice, is still more remote from the English reader and requires for its appreciation great cultural preparation and much

plasticity in the literary habits of the mind. Such reading as Calderon or the classic French drama or even Goethe and Schiller is for scholars. Foreign drama may now be more profitably approached by the contemporary forms, Scandinavian, German, French and Italian, than by its older historic examples. These plays are filled with a modern spirit that is becoming more and more cosmopolitan and pervasive, even among English-speaking people; the substance of them is not narrowly national, but universal in interest and in presentation; and the needful critical aids to assist the reader are plentiful and accessible.

The drama, as an artistic form, is of course much more complex than has been indicated; other things besides literature enter into it in its theatrical representation, and the appreciation of it as a spectacle involves other preparation and rests on other principles in addition to what belongs to it as literature. How great a part the scenic and choral arrangement played in the Greek drama has been already pointed out, and in the modern drama the importance of the theatrical elements is often such that as an art of the stage the play need not be literature at all. The scant resources of the Elizabethan stage threw a heavier burden on the literature of the text and brought the purely mental reproduction of life to the fore; and the power of Shakespeare as a writer is due to the genius he had for this mental representation of life without much aid from material conditions. It follows from this that his drama when read merely and not enacted yields a vision and a realization of life beyond that of theatrical writers or playwrights generally, so vivid and intense as to set the plays apart, not as closet dramas so-called to be read in the study, but as literature which gives up its

full contents to the eye of the mind unaided by the scene. Many, indeed, believe, as Lamb did, that such private reading is more satisfactory than any public representation, inasmuch as the presentation on the stage falls short of the scene and also of the actors that the imagination of the reader supplies. The stage craft of Shakespeare was of great assistance to him in casting the action, in handling its development and in suggesting modes of arrangement and display; but his poetic genius, achieving a vivid representation of life by purely mental means, made the plays great literature. The function of dramatic poetry, in comparison with epic poetry which presents life socially and by a method of extension, is to set life forth individually and by a method of intension; the drama is an intensive rendering of life by individual examples of human fortune which compress the truth of life into a brief abstract. Poetic dramatic genius by its powers of ideality condenses such general truth — the law of life — whether in action or character, and the greater the condensation the more brilliant and intense is the effect. Dramatic poetry involves the presentation of life in its supreme moments, its surpassing characters and its greatest problems, because it is in these that the intensity it seeks resides and the truth it would express is most vividly condensed. In tragedy, especially, the most obstinate evil, the most mysterious dispensations, the darkest moral problems, are set forth; what life contains of pessimism and ignorance is here heaped up; the theme indeed is often such an outbreak of passion, such crime or sacrilege, such violation as is seldom treated except in tragedy, and dramatic poetry has a certain peculiar power to treat such tales and characters as phenomena of life and passion still within the pale of

understanding, and even of sympathy, because human. The tragic imagination, when morbid and exclusive, seeks such themes; and if, as in Greece, they exist in the great tradition of the race, they are deeply meditated, as in the stories of Œdipus, Phædra and the Orestean trilogy. In modern tragedy one sups on horrors quite as much as in the palace of the Atridæ, though with a difference; yet it is the same presence of the terrible in human fate, of the issue of evil in sacrifice, expiation, suffering for the innocent and tragic death for the guilty, it is the pity of it even in lives of wrongful passion, that loads the theme in the great English plays as in the old Greek examples. If the great English themes as symbols of life seem nearer to reality in the deepest consciousness of modern times, the Greek themes in their own age were nearer to that consciousness in the antique; the supreme crises of action and passion, of man doing and suffering, do not change in substance but in the kind of interest taken in them and the interpretation given. Tragic themes are not instances of crime but instances of nature; it is because they are so regarded that they are tolerated by the contemplating mind; the will and responsibility of the spectator are not roused because there is no possibility of his interference, and he is not called on to give judgment or to correct, but only to observe, to know. This detachment from the practical sphere is a condition of tragic pleasure, which lies largely in the illumination of life given, in mere knowledge; in the antique world it was predominantly moral and religious knowledge; in the modern world it is perhaps mainly psychological and philosophic knowledge. Philosophy, therefore, in a special way belongs to dramatic poetry and is its natural ally in deepening appreciation of it, as biography is of lyrical and history of

narrative poetry. The drama addresses the reason, and endeavors to enlighten the understanding with regard to the law of human destiny; it is essentially philosophical, disclosing the abstract of truth, the constitution of the human world, the law of character and event. It wears this aspect the more plainly in proportion as it is great, more simply representative, more profoundly interpretative; and tragedy holds the first place in it because the problems there probed engage philosophical interest most deeply.

Tragedy, however, does not monopolize the philosophical meaning of dramatic poetry. In Shelley's choral drama, such as the "Prometheus Unbound," the intellectual abstraction is the fundamental substance of the poem; the characters are themselves allegorical and in their mythical personality stand for principles of life, while the action itself is a symbol of human progress. The play is merely a pictorial woof of music and light, a fleeting vision of lovely scenes, unless its intellectual element of ethical thought be clearly grasped to give it meaning; and it is in this significance to the mind, a philosophical significance, that the play becomes great, the only great play of the English genius in poetry in modern times. It is a reconciliation play, conceived in Shakespeare's last manner and as such is cognate to "The Tempest" as well as by its lyricism. The division of the thought from the characters is, perhaps, too much felt, the philosophy is too explicit and separable; but the theme, transforming the Revolution into the Millennium, is a great argument set forth dramatically and addressed to the reason. The most interesting drama, however, apart from tragedy, is that in which life is set forth with the effect of a dream, of a life that might be, of which

the best examples in English are the plays of Shakespeare's middle period and his last romances. They are characterized by a predominant lyricism in the treatment. The lyrical and epical elements in his genius were the first to come to maturity; in the English and Roman plays the epical element is plain, and the lyrical element appears in the early comedies, reaching its greatest purity and height in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The dream atmosphere of this play gives, perhaps, the type; but something of the same quality is in "Love's Labour's Lost," at the beginning of his career, and is the source of the profound fascination of such ripe comedies as "Twelfth Night," "As You Like It" and "The Merchant of Venice." The dramatic method is the same here as always, — an intensive representation of life by individual examples; but here it is the romance of life in its felicities that is set forth, with only such saddening as more endears it. In the three last romances, "Cymbeline," "A Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest," the dream is still the atmosphere of the play, but the felicity is enhanced by the darker elements that enter into the themes, and the hand that wrote these dramas is one that had been dipped deep in tragedy. They are the climax of dramatic art in England as an art that gives pleasure to the mind and also renders up wisdom. In other authors, too, it is the lyrical treatment of life in this dreamful way that most attracts the reader; in Jonson, in Beaumont and Fletcher, in Milton's "Comus," the pastoral and masque elements are those on which the memory most dwells. After tragedy this lyrical drama of Shelley, Shakespeare and Milton must be reckoned the greatest achievement in English, and the human philosophy which it gives out in forms of beauty is a high-water mark of the wisdom that literature reaches.

Poetry in its main forms, lyrical, narrative and dramatic, has now been touched upon with a view to suggest its nature, the way of approach to it, and the spirit that should attend the reader. It is obvious that the divisional marks are terms of convenience; there are lyrical and epical elements in drama, dramatic elements in lyric and epic; poetry treats life as a whole, and its power is integral, one power, whether put forth lyrically, epically, or dramatically. \Yet it is true that lyrical poetry mainly exercises the emotions; the epic discloses life in its extension in the social sphere; the drama embodies life intensively; and in each case severally, biography, or the love of the author, history, or a sense of the life of the race, and philosophy, or an interpretation of human nature, are the natural aids to appreciation in each kind. The end of poetry is to illuminate life from within the consciousness of the reader, to realize there his own emotions, the scene of life in the world, the constitution of passion and fate in man and his circumstances, to make him acquainted with the nature of man in him. Progress in this knowledge is usually more rapid in poetry than in prose, because of the condensation of life achieved by poetry, the use of the economics of art and the methods of reason in statement, and the emotional vividness that belongs to all poetic modes. In a field so immense as poetic literature presents, much must necessarily be neglected; the safest guide is the reader's instinct, the choice made by his own temperament and powers. The degree of appreciation will necessarily vary from the least to the most complete; but it need not be complete in order to be useful. The greatest books are those in which one grows the most and the longest. The end being to know human life, what man in his essence is, what he has been,

what he is capable of, there is no goal to the study; and the further one proceeds in it, the more, perhaps, he is burdened with the knowledge; but surely the destiny of the mind, if man has any destiny, is to lay this burden upon itself.

CHAPTER V

FICTION

THE art of literature, when it works in prose, does not change its method from that employed in poetry nor is its material different. Prose makes a less rigorous demand upon the reader's attention and ability; but the action of the mind involved is the same as in verse, the aims of study are the same and the modes of appreciation are identical. Art, or the universal form into which reason casts experience by means of the imagination, controls great works of prose as it rules great poems; fiction stands at the head of prose because it is the sphere in which such art works most freely and effectively; and in proportion to the presence of such art is fiction great and enduring. Poetry achieves the extreme of condensation of life and truth, and hence the appreciation of it requires a mind naturally rapid and strong in apprehension; a high-strung nature finds poetry fitted to it; but the reader generally, less intense in mental application and concentration, prefers prose as more adapted to the normal movement of his mind. This choice continues to operate even in prose, and the effort of the mind is relaxed in proportion as formative art is less present in the work and what is told is set forth in its natural and raw state of facts as they occur. Every nation has tales, and primitive people possess a store of folk-lore, but fiction as a special mode of literature develops somewhat late in civili-

zation. It has a literary ancestry, an historic evolution, which can readily be studied, and in its origins it is much mixed with poetry. In our own time it has come to fill so large a portion of the literary field as to be engrossing; it is in a peculiar sense the people's literature in our democracies, characterized by popular education, by home leisure, and by an extraordinary awakening of curiosity in large masses. It is a powerful means for the spread of information of all kinds and for the propagation of ideas; all knowledge is most interesting when given out in the form of imagination, and the demand for knowledge was never so great as now; it is altogether natural that the novel, the most flexible form of writing for imaginative propaganda, should be the preferred modern form of literature.

If one searches for the occasion of fiction and considers its wide range of topic and interest, it would seem that no more satisfactory answer can be given than mere human curiosity. In response to this, all that is knowable now takes on the form of the novel. In approaching the field choice seems almost impossible, so varied are the interests involved and all with many claims to regard. The young mind, however, has a native instinct of its own grounded in human nature. The first interest of men is in action, in the event, the thing which is done. This is the interest of the boy, of the practical man, of the man whose meditative and fuller spiritual life is only begun. The type of fiction of this sort is "Robinson Crusoe." It is a tale of the facts of life in a wonderfully interesting form, and the literary life of thousands has begun with it. The more exalted type is the novels of Dumas, where in a romantic form the life of action is set forth with the interest of vividness, surprise and the fascination of adventure.

Nothing can be better than Dumas to arouse in a boy the sense of the power of life, the ambition of doing, the wonder of the things that can be done, — the whole charm and marvel of the world of the deed. Romance is at its highest in this field, and the awakening influence of romance on the mind cannot be overvalued; it opens out the roads of all the earth and the seas, and gives the career of a gallant will in meeting the unknown and finding the hidden treasure of a man's destiny. Herodotus was in history the very type of such spirit as this, and it made his history one of the great books of the world. Travelers often show and breed the spirit of their tales, and the heroes are made of it from the voyage of the Argo to the days of the search for the Pole. In imaginative literature Dumas is the great example, and in the many volumes that bear his name there is endless store of the most inspiriting kind of such action.

The first advance is made when the mind is no longer content with the action in itself, but meditates it, and finds its true interest to lie in what the act reveals of the character of the man who performs it. In other words, character is a higher interest than action, and supplants it as the object of attention in a maturing mind. Character is, in fact, a summary of action and contains both the effect of past and the promise of future acts; it is, as it were, a brief abstract of action, its potentiality. Man here comes into his rights as the leading interest in the scene, independent of the events. Character is necessarily ideal in literature; it is set forth by its ruling passion, and in the beginning is simple rather than complex, since its presentation is limited to that class of action in which its distinction resides; one reason of the effectiveness of character in its more antique or primitive embodiments

is this simplicity flowing from the extreme ideality or abstractness of the type. The Greek heroes share somewhat in the trait of being by virtue of which the gods are ideal, each having a function of his own, being an Ajax, Patroclus, Orestes, Jason, Heracles, and hence marked out for his work. Character is thus in its early forms action viewed in one mode, as it were, and compacted into human power, unified, individualized, personified. The act is of interest in itself still, but it is of more interest as being the act of Achilles or Ulysses and as declaring what manner of men they were. Character is more profound than action, and hence to a mature mind is more engaging. This is especially noticeable in those persons who are named characters in our common speech, — the usually eccentric personalities who are peculiarly specimens of human nature out of the ordinary, and by their words or actions give a fresh, piquant, or humorous impression. Without regard to such exceptions, however, character awakes a profound interest because in its types are stored ideals of what men are, the forms cast by the moral habits and the aspirations and experiences of the race, the qualities consonantly to be found within the limits of one personality, the discords possible within the same range; character is thus a compend of the results of life, of its possibilities in the individual, of its fusion in a single mold. In this stage character is not divorced from action, but both are present; the character is seen acting; the actions however various are resumed in the character. The type of such interest, of balance between action and character such that nevertheless the character rather than the action impresses the mind and memory, is given in Sir Walter Scott's novels, and the unique place that Scott holds in English fiction is due to this firm

grasp of life in the form of character which is still kept close to action. This is the trait by which his art as a creator is so supreme, though the power with which he seizes the reader also owes much to the intrinsic nature of the character displayed, to its being national in type whether Scotch or English and showing that nationality strongly and finely in essential traits, to its being doubly presented as of the peasant and the noble classes, and in each exemplified with truth to the life of the one and the ideal of the other, and also to its being inclusive in its eccentric or abnormal instances of so much that is plain human nature, so that one may say indeed that no types are so universally true as those which seem most peculiar in his pages, such as the old antiquary, Norna or the saints of the Covenant. Scott is the great master of character; not that other English novelists have not equaled him in such portrayal, but none have created character upon such a scale, in such profusion, with such social comprehensiveness, and at the same time with such unfailing human reality. In his works one always finds the substance is not the stream of events, however romantic and involved in mystery, but man acting and suffering; not the plot, but the character. There is a perennial attraction in character that does not pertain to mere story; and this mastery of character is the trait which makes Scott to be so often re-read and to be a favorite in later as well as in youthful years.

Character develops a new kind of interest when attention is fastened, not on what it is, but on how it came to be what it is. The internal life here comes to the fore; the evolution of personality, a train of inward phenomena, is substituted for a course of external events as the subject of interest, however much events may be mixed with

the story. This study of motivation and internal reaction marks the final stage of the development of the novel in its presentation of life and completes the circuit of its sphere. Psychology, analysis, introspection, characterize it, and it requires in the reader an intellectual interest perhaps stronger than the imaginative interest. The history of a soul, rather as a phase of inward experience than of action, is the focus of attention. The introspective novel in the emotional sphere, the novel of sentiment, is an early form of such analysis and is illustrated in Richardson, but in its higher and more complex examples the psychological novel full-grown naturally allies itself to some theory of morals, some abstract element in religion or ethics, and sets forth life as an education of the character in such a view. The type, perhaps, in which the various constituents are the most clear and at the same time noble, is George Eliot's "Romola," in which great and conflicting ideals of life are presented through the medium of the leading characters by a psychological and largely introspective treatment. Her interest in life was that of a philosophical moralist, and her fiction showed increasingly the analytical habit. The simpler blends of character and action in her earlier tales give place in her fully ripened work to a wide and complex exposition of the nature of her persons in which the element of thought finally overweights the narrative. Just as dramatic poetry issues in a philosophical interest, so the novel, as it develops power and grasps life more profoundly and naturally, appeals with greater directness to the intellect in its effort to understand human life. It may develop this intellectual quality in either of the three forms of pure action, of synthetic or of analytic character, but the quality is most pronounced, pervasive and

engrossing in the last. In such writers as Henry James and George Meredith it reaches a climax. Literature, moreover, must always be viewed historically as obeying the general law of evolution in society; its movement is constantly toward a representation of the inward nature of life, to bring out man's self-consciousness, to reveal personality. The problems of personality are those which finally engage the mature mind in a highly developed literature, and the psychological novel is the center where this study is most active. This line of development is not peculiar to fiction, but belongs to literature in general, which tends more and more to become a confessional of the soul's experience, a dissection of life, a pursuit of the motives and reactions of the inner world, of the moods and methods of thought and passion in their intimate cells, of all the secrets, in one word, of personality.

The interest of the novel being thus distributed in these three general modes of action, character in action, and personality for its own sake, the story itself may be unfolded in any one of many ways or by a blend of several, the chief elements being plot, character, situation, dialogue, sentiment, and the like, variously compounded according to the talent and purpose of the writer. A greater emphasis on any one of these elements gives a special quality to the work and makes a particular appeal to some one class of readers whose taste is for that element. Whatever methods be employed, the enduring worth of the novel in its English examples depends much on the success of the writer in giving the scene of life as a whole, in securing the illusion of a full world, or one that at least is complete for the characters inhabiting it. The perfection of this environing of the characters with a world is seen in Shakespeare's plays; and in proportion

as the novelists achieve this effect, and at the same time obtain human reality, they show the highest imaginative power, true creative faculty. There is no surer sign of greatness in a novel than this large grasp of general life, the crowded stage, the throng of affairs, the sense of a world of men. It was thus that Dickens began to display his remarkable faculty in "Pickwick Papers," rendering the various face of English life and manners in a series of loosely connected sketches. Character and manners, seconded by genial good nature and humorousness, make the perennial attraction of that marvelous piece of entertainment, which was the precursor of great novels conceived on more rigorous lines of construction and with more breadth and poignancy of interest, but all alike in this power to render life as a miscellaneous scene of human activity. Scott similarly in his greatest tales never fails to give largeness to his world and to fill it with currents of social life, with events of high interest and with a multitude of persons. Thackeray in a narrower sphere of society follows the same method in "Vanity Fair," and Fielding in "Tom Jones." In all these authors the hero counts for little; the particular tale of individuals involved, the plot, the mere personal story, however well constructed and interesting that part of the work may be, is yet represented as a portion of the world only, a world that embraces them in its larger being. In "David Copperfield" the tale of Emily and that of Agnes divide the interest, but they seem episodes; it is the picture of life as a whole that dwells in the memory. In this larger world it may be character and manners or the interplay of events, it may be superficial movement, as in the picaresque novel generally, or it may be profound social movement, as in the greater historical novels, that holds

the front place; but whatever the method, the substance is of the world of men.

The highest degree of universality and inclusiveness is reached in Cervantes's "Don Quixote," which while remaining a tale of individuals sums up the national scene, the elements of Spain, its genius, its history, and also gives through this the sense of human life in the broad, the truth of human nature as it is everywhere. "Don Quixote" is the greatest of all novels because singly it contains so large a world. In lesser novels of similar type the world set forth does not lose unity, it does not seem partial, but yet it comprehends only some portion of the scene, as in the provincial novel generally, or some strip of time, as in the historical novel. The breadth of the theme makes a large part of the intrinsic value of such novels, which offer an embodiment, for example, of present life, or a panorama of an epoch, or a rehabilitation of an antique age. Irish tales are good in proportion as they give the Irish spirit and environment. Reade's "The Cloister and the Hearth" is a great historical novel because of its breadth of treatment, and Kingsley's "Hypatia" excels because of its comprehensiveness, its being a summary of one moment of ancient life intensely imagined. In all these novels there is a theme, which in a certain sense exceeds and contains the personal theme, a theme of time, — of Alexandria, of the Middle Ages, of Ireland. It is not at all essential that this outer theme should be rendered with historical accuracy or be true in its details in the sense of fact. What is necessary is that an illusion of truth should be arrived at by fidelity to the general traits of the city, the age, or the land, so that the world of the story shall be representative of what was. One reason of the facility with which the historical

novel is written and received is because this outer theme, Rome or Italy or France, is in itself great, and an undying interest of powerful fascination belongs to it independent of the particular tale that may be narrated as a personal history within its limits. Such a theme naturally induces a series, the Jacobite novels of Scott, the Indian and sea-tales of Cooper; each particular story is but one product of it, and no author exhausts it though he may exhaust his own power of dealing with it. The theme, the world of men involved, diminishes in importance in proportion as the particular tale makes head and absorbs attention; but, in general, great novelists give the scene of the world, the picture of life, whether in a contemporary or historical range, the first place in their representation. This is true without reference to the scale of that world; it is, for example, the method of Goldsmith in "The Vicar of Wakefield." The novel is indeed the form of literary art best adapted to representing man as a social being and to setting forth in imagination social phenomena; this is one reason, also, why its evolution is so late in the history of literature.

The art of literature in passing into the novel does not lose its function of presenting general truth. That is still its main aim. The necessity of doing so, in fact, underlies all that has been said of the part taken in the novel by the scene of life, the illusion that it must give of a world, whether in the sphere of manners or history, not actual but containing the general reality of human events in a particular time or country and of human nature in its essential traits. There is an epical element, as is plain, in the description which fiction of the sort that has been treated gives of life. When the social theme is less prominently brought forward and the particular story of

a few individuals enlists attention for its own sake, then the novel avails itself of the same resources used in dramatic art. It represents the general law of life and the constitution of human nature by means of examples, and the worth of the novel depends, just as in a play, on the simplicity, clearness and profundity with which it accomplishes the task. There is no material difference between the novel and the drama so far as the handling of plot, situation and dialogue are concerned, except that in a novel the writer has a free hand and can use more means of displaying his characters and their career. In George Eliot's "Adam Bede," for example, there is, it is true, a background of country and clerical life and of religious agitation; but the story is mainly conducted in the fortunes of a few individuals placed in the foreground. It is a tragic history that is related. Its profound interest is its life interest, the illustration it gives of human events, the light it throws on principles of conduct, belief, the operation of wrong, facts of passion, theories of sin and salvation and the like. The story exists and was written for the sake of its teaching power; and this is more manifest than in the drama because in the medium of prose the teaching can be more plainly brought out and emphasized. Such novels are dramatic in their interest; they cover the same tracts of life as the drama, whether in comedy or tragedy, and the mode of mental approach to them is the same, except that the novelist makes understanding of his theme more easy for the reader by the greater fullness of the presentation and by the comment that, whether explicit or implicit, is always to be found in the text. It may be said, indeed, that there is no form of poetic truth that the novel in one way or another may not present, usually but not always with less

intensity; the analysis of the novel discloses the same substance as poetry, the same fundamental human life which is the matter of all literature. Symbolical truth is that which is, perhaps, thought of as most characteristic of poetry; but it exists in the novel quite as plainly and in its most apparent forms. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is a work of fiction which has all its meaning in the spiritual truth which is there set forth in allegory, and it is one of the most widely distributed of English books. The type of the method, is, however, rather to be found in Hawthorne. In his short romantic tales it is commonly used, as, for example, in "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "The Artist of the Beautiful," where the reader who does not interpret the symbols misses the meaning. "The Scarlet Letter" is a still more striking example of the symbolic representation of life; the background of the Puritan world is but slightly indicated by the romancer, but he blazes forth its essence by a series of picturesque scenes that are like a sign language of the imagination. The same author's "Marble Faun" pursues the same method; the world involved is but lamely made out, and so inadequately that even Donatello seems an alien in it, like the rest, but none the less a theory of sin is symbolized by means of it with a refinement and intimacy such that one seems rather to be looking at pictures and statues than listening to a tale of events. To render life by symbols of landscape and idyllic situations belongs peculiarly to poetry, but in the Greek novel it is found as charmingly set forth as in verse, and the pastoral enters as an element into much prose fiction in various forms. In Watts Dunton's "Aylwin" characteristically poetic modes are prevailingly employed to render gypsy nature. So near is romance to poetry that it often makes

the distinct poetic appeal, as, to take a great instance, in Blackmore's "Lorna Doone." The lyric, dramatic and epic elements, being fundamental in literature, are all to be found in prose fiction, and the art employed is the same creative imagination constructing an illusory world in order to set forth the general truth of human life.

Fiction, therefore, in its great examples approaches poetry because it uses the same material to the same ends and proceeds by the same method of art, universalizing life and formulating it; but it differs from poetry because it is less delicate in the selection of its material, less exacting of a high degree of art in dealing with it, and directed to utilities that poetry ignores. The art of fiction is two-faced; it is both a fine and a useful art; and if on the one hand in works of great genius it comes nigh to the supreme masters of the drama, on the other extreme it neighbors that universal human service of which the modern name is journalism, — the literature of information, propagandism, world-wide curiosity, discussion, speculation, of which it may be said more truly than of any other form of writing that nothing human is alien to it. Journalism is the most catholic form of the written word. The novel is the next most embracing, and its flexibility as a social instrument under present conditions has given it the commanding practical place which it holds among readers. It is by the novel that the life-knowledge of modern peoples is most fully realized to themselves, in every degree of the scale of society, in popular apprehension. This great change was largely effected by the advent of democracy. In the old literature the national tradition and morality were concentrated in the history, real or imaginary, of the aristocratic class with but slight popular elements, and this was handed down in poetry

and chronicle and tale; but with the coming of modern democracy the popular life itself came into the field of interest, and literature giving more and more attention to the citizen life ended by assigning to the common lot of men the place which has formerly been held by the aristocracy. The democratizing of literature which began with Richardson and Fielding, in the novel, and with Burns and Wordsworth, in poetry, resulted in the last century in England in a representation of life in all its classes, provinces, and interests, such as no civilization had ever before placed on record about itself. The reading class was democratic, and men like to read about themselves, to see their own lives reflected, their opinions expressed, and their ideals defined; they also desire information about the way other men live whose modes of behavior and thought, though they may be members of the same society, are not well or intimately known; a public thus came into existence for which the minute and detailed portrayal of all sorts and conditions of Englishmen, and of every nook of English ground, was interesting. The field of human life covered by the novel became immense in variety and comprehensiveness. There were certain preferred tastes inherent in English society, and the English novel showed these preferences; the writers, too, could deal individually only with such phases of life as they knew; the novel remained socially aristocratic and middle-class, with an episodic attention to the lower state of society, but it faithfully reflected the consciousness of the English people, and the growth of the democracy is shown in the ever increasing emergence of the literature of the least favored, the stricken and abandoned class. Dickens was the leader and marks the powerful entrance of philanthropy into the novel, and the

portraiture of the lower class by him and others perhaps made up in genius what it lacked in quantity. The English, however, are not a frank race, and various as their picture of life is in the novel, it is still discreet and controlled. France, in the representation of life given by her novelists, exceeded the English in the comprehensive fullness of the portrayal; both Balzac and Zola attempted a survey of life more systematic and complete than any single English author conceived, and the French novel surpasses the English as an ample expression of human nature in all social degrees and conditions. There was an advantage in the concentration of the national tradition and morality in the old literature which was especially favorable to poetry; on the other hand the dispersion of interest by the democracy through all classes of society and in all parts of the national body creates a stronger social bond, develops humanitarianism and is vastly more informing to the mind. The exposure of human conditions accomplished by the novel is a powerful element in social progress.

The expansion of the historical consciousness of modern society was an element hardly less important than the democratization of fiction as an influence on the development of the novel. What is loosely termed the Gothic revival with its resuscitation of the mediæval age and its discovery of the primitive poetry of the North, and the Hellenic revival with its reinvigoration of Latin studies and its discovery of archæology in the South, opened between them the whole past of Europe through its entire extent, while the developing contact of England with the East brought with it the fiction of the Orient as well as its poetry. History in many forms was pursued in order to unveil the past and the distant, and it laid open new

material for the novelist; as soon as Scott had so brilliantly shown that history was most fascinating in the form of imaginative romance, the novel entered upon its career of recreating the past with extraordinary vigor, and it has found in this field a scope and diversity that make the historical novel perhaps the preferred form of the art. The history of the world has been rewritten in the last century as fiction; even what is most recondite and obscure, and belongs to the world of the learned, has been clothed with color and vitality as if contemporary, in the tales of Roman Africa, Egypt and Byzantium in which the French especially excel. In the more barbarous parts of history, such as the East of Europe, native writers have reconstructed the past and made it available for other nations. The reader of the historical novel, in fact, without effort commands an intelligent knowledge of the history of the European world and its antecedent classical sources such as would not have been possible even to a scholar in the last age.

The novel thus contains a vast fund of information which it diffuses. It is a teaching power of immense efficiency, and still more useful for the spread of ideas than for the diffusion of facts. It has developed a power of propagandism which has previously been found mainly in eloquent discourse. The type of such use of the novel is Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin." In a lower form it is constantly employed as an instrument of discussion. A good example is Brontë's "Jane Eyre," in which a moral situation is presented in conflict with human law. Every cause finds in the novel a mode of presenting the facts, and advocating the ideas, which it is especially concerned to make known. One of the most precious of human rights, the right to be heard, is practically secured by the

wide-spread and habitual employment of fiction as a public forum. All knowledge gains by being put into the form of a tale; it travels faster, it enters the mind more vividly, it enlists the emotions more powerfully. The power of propaganda is one of the chief traits of the novel as a social force. The novel, moreover, vivifies intellectual interest of all kinds. It follows, for example, in the wake of scientific discovery, of exploration, of mere speculation, and forthwith builds a tale on the new ground. The most recent knowledge of foreign lands, wars, industrial adventure, commercial progress, social experiment, is immediately popularized in this form. Every community, every employment of men, every idea is gathered in this drag-net of the time; the novel has become the epitome of the modern world.

In the case of a form of literature so variously characterized, so miscellaneously reproductive of experience and in its mass hardly to be divided from life itself, the reader finds himself bewildered and choice is difficult. The literary principle of worth is plain, but other values enter in, and disturb and deflect the decision of the mind. The utilities of reading are so many, and in some cases so attractive, that the confinement of choice by the principle of art is often felt to be a hardship and to result in substantial loss. To state the principle broadly, fiction as an art has worth in proportion to the fullness of its representation, to the arc of life it includes within a single work, where the treatment is extensive in method, or to the intensity of its representation, to the power of life it includes, when the treatment is intensive. The more of life, in extension or intension, that any book has, the greater is the book. This is the general principle, true of all literature, because the literary art has for its end

to concentrate life and truth by the use of the imagination in examples that are finally interpreted by the mind, consciously or unconsciously, as universal symbols. Those novels are highest in literary interest which accomplish this purpose with most fullness. "Don Quixote" has already been cited as the type of such greatness and rank; and, in general, the sign of fullness of meaning in the extensive sense is, as has been said, the presence in the novel of the great scene of life. Ideal literature, greatly inclusive of life and character, holds the first place in fiction as in poetry.

The English novel of itself yields some guidance. It is, perhaps, the purest growth of English literary genius, that in which native power is most unmixed with foreign elements. English poetic genius is largely indebted to foreign grafts, to the continental mediums of the old tradition and to that tradition in its antique sources. English poetry cannot be very intelligently understood except by a classically educated mind, and its creators directly or indirectly were bred of the South of Europe and heirs of the Mediterranean. With English fiction the case is different. Character has always held a favored place in the minds of the English; whether in the form of practical action or of moral precept a prime value has been placed upon it; the English mind is prepossessed with the moral meaning of life, with its practical issues, with its ethical reality. Reality, too, in its obvious forms of fact, event, fixed trait, is a large ingredient in the interest the English take in life; they are attached to the soil and to the characters that grow out of it, to human nature as modified and modeled by it, to the strength of life that thrives there. English life, in the home-bred, high-flavored, obvious form was the subject of the Eng-

lish novel from the first moment of its greatness, and a predominant interest in character controlled it. The tradition of Fielding was never lost; the handling of genuine human events for the display of character, and both in close neighborhood with the soil, is characteristic of the English novel in the great line of its development. It followed from this that the novel entered easily into national literature. What makes literature national is its embodiment of the national tradition and the national morality; it is plain at a glance that Fielding and Scott accomplished this with great power, and Dickens and Thackeray likewise in their turn; in these four writers their countrymen are presented with extraordinary fidelity in the scene of their life and with reality. It is the life of England and of Englishmen, of Scotland and of Scotchmen, that is read in these books; and the minor novelists, Goldsmith, Smollett, Sterne, Austen, Bronté, supplement the great masters with a picture of life similarly English-bred. The work of George Eliot and Kingsley is most interesting, and is either great or approaches greatness, in proportion as it adds to the stream of national tradition, in the scene of English life, and of national morality, in the display of manners and ideals of plain English mold. The reader who is seeking the substance of life in the novel should keep close to this great tradition of English life in the books where it is most vividly put forth and is felt to be most national. A national literature is always great, because it contains the ideal form of the nation reminiscently beheld. Those English novels have the most worth in which life and character are most nationally portrayed with breadth, reality, and affection; they are found in the line of the standard tradition.

What makes literature standard is that it permanently

embodies the national consciousness in its historic forms as each ceases to be contemporary and passes into memory. Standard literature is consequently always partially out-of-date and falls to the scholar or to the reader who desires to realize the past. It often happens, however, that standard literature long retains a living relation to successive generations by virtue of its containing some element that does not grow out of date, and literature is great in proportion as it contains this principle of life. Achilles and Ulysses, for example, continued through ages to be real and nigh to the Greek consciousness of life. The novel, inasmuch as it is more mixed with contemporary and transitory elements than poetry, passes more quickly into the past; but the standard English novel still retains many characters and much action that are as contemporary to our minds as when the story was originally written. A man, nevertheless, must live and die with his own generation, and the literature that is really out of date need not greatly concern him, except so far as he desires to be informed about the past of his people and their writers.

A second guiding principle in the field of the novel may be found in the power it has to expand the mind and interests of the reader. The office of the novel in expanding knowledge, in making the world known to itself in all parts, has been touched on; in the individual case the reader may be guided in his choice in proportion as he finds the material and power of the writer working this effect in himself. This expansion of the mind is most valuable when it takes place in the world of humanity at large so that the reader becomes better informed with regard to the common lot of mankind and is thereby made more humane, more fully man, more sympathetically at

one with his fellows. Perhaps the greatest humanitarian novel is Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables," both by the scope of its scene and action and by the ideas that shape and create the story. In a broader way the Russian novel, taken in its whole career, gives a revelation of the lot of mankind which is to the reader like the discovery of a new land, and in connection with it stand humanitarian ideas closely joined; the expansion both of knowledge and of sympathy is most serviceable and the literary type of the Russian novel is itself high both for plot, character and passion. The power of expansion, however, does not reside only in foreign novels or depend on a new and distant scene or a strange mode of life. Any great experience expands the mind; and, in a secondary way, to read of a great experience has the same effect. The experience of a great love is the most transforming power in life, and hence no type of story is so constant, so sure of interest, or so valuable. This is the fascination of "Lorna Doone," and of many another tale. The experience of a great repentance makes the attraction of "The Scarlet Letter." The great novels of tragedy and passion have their power over the reader in the sense of this experience, which he lives through in imagination and takes partially at least to himself. If the mind expands either in information and sympathy, leading to a fuller comprehension of the common lot, or in realizing the great experiences of life, the reader may well be assured that he is in a right path.

A third working principle, and one of the widest application, is recreation. Fiction is the home of mental leisure; and nowhere is the fundamental aim of literature, the will to please, pursued so purely and with such unrestricted freedom. Men take their recreation variously, and no rule can be laid down. Some enjoy reading about

themselves and their neighbors and seeing life as they know it, in a book. The more common way is to desire a change of scene, a new environment and a tale that shall take us out of ourselves. The presence of excitement in the story is the surest means of causing absorption of interest and securing that release from the every-day world which is sought, a break in the monotony of life and affairs, or rest from its overtaxing business; and in the present time often the wish is to escape from the world of thought. The great hold of the novel of adventure on the public is due to such desires; it is action that is wanted, or character which puts all of itself into deeds and is scarcely known except as it acts. This is the simplest form of fiction and makes the least demand upon the reader, while it allows him to lead in fancy and sympathy a life which is stirring and at the same time irresponsible. The novel of adventure holds the first place in the literature of recreation and is to be found wherever tales are told. It has the advantage of always having a story to tell; it blends with the great events and famous personages of history and also with the unknown on sea and land, with lonely peril, with villainy of every kind; it taxes human energy and resource to the utmost, and appeals to that love of the heroic which is the most deep-seated of the noble instincts of man. It is not surprising that it should always have been the prime element in fiction as it was in poetry, the literature of the deed done in danger, whether for war or love or in the contest with the elements, the story of man's gallantry, trial and rescue in every race and under every sky. To read it is to return to the youth of the world and of life, to dip in action and to forget, for the dream of action is the most complete of dreams; it "covers one all over, thoughts and

all," like Sancho's sleep. Such romance, too, recreates the vigor and cheerfulness of life, as it stimulates youthful energy; it is refreshing, not merely by change, but by its electrical charging of the original instincts of man and the excitement it imparts to them. Romance believes in man and in life, as youth does, and develops positive power, assertion and daring in the temperament that it imbues; it repairs the waste of faith and hope and resolution, as poetry does, and gives back to instinct what thought has taken from its power. The war sagas of old, the minstrel's tale in the baron's hall, the episodes and cycles of chivalry were such a reinvigoration in primitive days, and modern romance in its infinitely varied forms, from peril by sea and land to peril for a faith, a crown or a cause, is the lineal descendant of these and serves in modern life a like need. It is that part of literature where impulse has the largest play; and it gives freedom of movement and a life in the imagination to impulses that life confines; it enlarges life and provides that supplement to reality which human nature requires for its wholeness. The inexhaustible demand for it shows that it is grounded on a real need.

The tale of adventure, in every period of literature, has been thus highly prized as a form of recreation. It blends naturally with the tale of mystery, or the wonder-tale, which perhaps holds the second place in general favor. In its form of pure marvel the treasure-house of this sort of literature is "The Arabian Nights." They suggest childhood to us, and the childhood of a race also, but the experience of a mature and old race is curiously mixed with the picture of life they represent. English literature is rich in translations, adaptations and imitations of this oriental play of fancy, actual manners and

wisdom; they make an interesting episode in the history of the English genius so eagerly assimilative of every foreign strain and closely in contact with the Oriental people. Pure marvel, however, is too baseless a fabric for the English temperament, and the tale of mystery in the history of the English novel has preferred the form in which the mystery is solved. The episode of what is called the Gothic romance, Walpole's "Castle of Otranto," with its successors by Mrs. Radcliffe and Monk Lewis, introduced the wonder-story that is solved, the supernatural there being explained by mechanical means; it was followed by the mystery tales of Poe, in the next generation, and the detective tale, but the explanation involved in these is a weakness in interest. The tales are discredited by the completeness of the explanation, and it is only by the subtlety of the reasoning involved and something abnormal in the circumstances, as in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," that they maintain a lasting life in literature. Mystery, as an enduring theme, prefers its old lairs; in the cruder form it requires the Rosicrucians, the secret orders and problems, the theosophists of India, and leaves something still doubtful and inscrutable at the end; or it contents itself with the interest of a well-concealed plot which finally discloses its secret to the relief of the mind. Science and the scientific spirit killed the wonder-story in its supernatural and merely marvelous form, its fairy and spirit play; nor has scientific marvel in becoming itself the subject of imagination at all filled the old place which it emptied of meaning. The sea is the natural abode of mystery, but the sea-novel has not been especially successful in retaining that element from the days before the oceans were known and charted. Mystery is, however, so inherent in life,

and it is so fascinating to men, that its older forms will long retain imaginative power, and in the greatest novels in which it takes on a moral form, the mystery of man's life and fates, it will remain imbedded, not merely as an artifice of the plot, but as the substance of the meaning.

Mystery and romance do not exhaust the interest of the novel of recreation, which has infinite variety; but they sufficiently illustrate its nature. A third sort should, perhaps, be noticed; the tale which by its representation of quiet life and humble folks, like the pastoral idyl of old days, acts rather as an anodyne. Such stories of simplicity are a perennial product in all lands and times, often wrought with high and enduring art. The old country life of England and America affords them as a product of the native soil, and in the fiction of the south of Europe they make one of the purest elements of charm, as in the Sicilian and Sardinian novel of the day. The life of people near the soil, truly told in its human interests, secures almost without effort some of the best results of art by virtue of what it excludes and the simplicity and truth of what remains. Reality, such as this, mystery and romance are, perhaps, the most important forms of recreation afforded by the novel; they are, at least, characteristic forms. A long catalogue would not exhaust the varieties of interest here to be found; the novel, as was said, is the epitome of modern life. At last the question of approach to the novel is one of individual liking, temperament, experience, inclination and necessities; seriously read, the novel is a study of life; practically it is a mode of recreation, entertainment, amusement. Desultory reading is one of the most useful as well as pleasurable of literary pursuits; and nowhere is it more in place or more fruitful than in the novel.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER PROSE FORMS

The principal supports of imaginative literature, as has been indicated, are biography, history and philosophy. In pure imagination ideality is the characteristic product of the art, and measures its power and success; next to it in literary interest is personality. Those books, of whatever sort, that contain personality in interesting forms best illustrate life and are most attractive and enduring in minor literature. Biography succeeds best when the subject of it and the circumstances of his life and the events of his career are described with the closest approximation to imaginative methods, so that he lives and is seen with the clear vitality of characters in a novel. It was Boswell's power to render character by dialogue and anecdote that made his life of Johnson a classic biography. There are few lives that even approach that work as a truthful picture of a man in his peculiar individuality. Autobiography is generally a surer way to vivid personality, and the great autobiographies are sincere or unconscious confessions; of the first type Franklin gave a memorable example, and of the second Pepys' "Diary" is the immortal instance. Letters are an autobiographic form essentially, but they usually give a picture of the society of the writer, and are often as interesting for what they contain of the age as for what they reveal of the person. Walpole's letters are such a view of a period of English culture; and the letters of Gray, Cowper and

Fitzgerald, each in his own social group, have such a double value, social and personal. The letters of Byron and of Shelley both contain more of the personality of those poets than has ever passed into any of the many lives of each of them. In biography, generally, which avails itself of letters, as one element of the story, the reader is content with a diluted personality, and finds the subject set forth, not directly, but by narrative and criticism, with reflected lights from the environment and social group of the subject; but whatever is human, if it be sincerely described, is so surely interesting that biography has long been a large part of secondary literature. It has the advantage to some minds, less capable of seizing truth abstractly in ideal persons, of bringing to them something that is known to be real. It has the felicity also of illustrating the richness of life in refined or capable natures, and of the excellence of men and women in careers perhaps not of remarkable distinction, but of great usefulness and noble in service. That biography which is rather a portion of history and sets forth surpassing character, such as Plutarch's "Lives," is not far below heroic poetry in its power of ideal type; and the far larger portion which relates the lives of men notable for their experience, for individual talent or social service or for romance in their fortunes, is not far removed from character in fiction. Choice in biography is commonly a matter of accident, an affair of private preference or interest; but its chief use is to enrich the reader's sense of character and the value he places on human qualities, on personality. Biography, too, unlocks the sympathies, and often exercises an intimate and direct awakening influence, especially upon practical natures less open to ideal enthusiasm.

Those sporadic books which obtain the place of classics in literature often seem to owe their vogue to a biographical element in them, in so far as they are representative of the peculiar mind and tastes of their authors. The type is Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," Walton's "Complete Angler" or Browne's "Religio Medici," or the writings of the modern American "Autocrat," Dr. Holmes. They contain a miscellany of matters, interesting in themselves, but which have passed through the individuality of their authors and acquired a certain human unity and new significance from a living contact, even when the matter itself is antiquarian or remote, or merely singular in a humoristic sense. They give the mind of the man, and are distinguished by originality such as has its only source in character. Enjoyment of them depends on some special aptitude of the reader for appreciating the kind of mind involved, and some intellectual sympathy with the matter which takes its stamp. To give the mind of the man is a distinction for any book. It is of more interest when the mind is typical, as Wellington's letters give the mind of the soldier. When the mind takes on great ideal breadth, the book becomes a classic of the world, as in Thomas à Kempis' "Imitatio Christi" or St. Francis' "Fioretti," which yield the mind of the Christian and of the saint. It often happens that biography, without being widely inclusive of a human type, nevertheless reflects human experience in narrower bands and gives the spectrum of special moods of human nature. The lives of the saints, and religious biography in general, owe much of their interest to this reflection of private experience, and more brilliant or pure expression of moods already partially known or latent in the reader; as heroic lives appeal to instinctive ambition and desire for adventure, these

appeal to the instinctive piety of men. To give the life in a person is the quality in these books which makes them commanding. Wherever the subject is taken up, it is personality that is the secret of all such literature. It is sometimes represented that personality, especially in the autobiographic sense, is modern in literature, and specifically that it was a discovery of Petrarch; but, though the principle has had a great career in modern writing, so broad a statement must be doubtfully regarded. Lives were a favorite form of ancient literature. The "Commentaries" of Cæsar are not so different from Wellington's "Correspondence," the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius from the "Imitation of Christ," the "Confessions" of St. Augustine from those of Rousseau; Pythagoras and Epicurus were men who made an immense personal impression, and the power of a personality as well as of a doctrine made the victory of Christianity over the third part of the world. In the centuries of Roman greatness just before and after Christ personality was a main object of literary attention, and probably interest in it did not vary much from that felt in the Renaissance, though the record of it was seldom put forth autobiographically. It is probably an error to think that any form of individualism was unknown to the Roman world, and our biographic records of antiquity are on the whole rich. We know nearly as much, for example, of Sophocles as of Shakespeare.

Travel, which is popularly so fascinating a branch of literature, is a near neighbor to biography. The character of the traveler and the human interest of his journey make a large part of the charm of what he tells. Everything is seen through his eyes, his curiosity controls the view, his pursuits confine the attention. Herodotus was one of

the best of travelers, as eager to know men and manners as Ulysses, full of the romance of things freshly known; a more interesting book was hardly handed down by antiquity. Travel attracts the reader mainly by the unknown, and perhaps the best of travel is now historic; for the story of travel has always attended the story of national greatness. The mass of it is that which was written in the years of the discovery of the world beyond Europe on all its horizons, and for English readers is to be found in the great collections of Hakluyt and others. In a later time the story of exploration in Africa and Asia and about the Pole contains its most vivid chapters and blends the pleasure of new knowledge with individual adventure. A finer literary quality, however, belongs to writers who are not explorers, but who in romantic lands or strange environments feel and render the local color and incident and novelty of what is before them, and, in a literary sense, are masters of atmosphere. The French are good travelers, and none are more expert in modern days in giving atmosphere. The literary treatment of travel is more a French than an English art. Kinglake's long famous "Eöthen" was an excellent narrative, strong and vivid in rendering the eastern scene and its figures, but he had neither the subtilty nor the sympathy of the southern temperament, and none of the imaginativeness of the French masters such as Loti. Irving is, perhaps, the best of our travelers of the literary habit, who use their material with an eye to its effect as an intimate imaginative portrayal. His writings on special topics realize the romance of the land, the figures of knight and Moor the life of an historically enchanted soil; and even in England he is still the best of American travelers for the sentiment of the scene. Literary travel

is, however, hardly a considerable portion of the field. It is rather in simpler narratives, that detail the truth of the country districts of Europe or the adventure of some long ride in the East or the South, that most pleasure is to be found; and though past voyages were the novel of travel, and their literature was immense, it is seldom now that any voyage is interesting except it be scientific. Anthropology and archeology, in their attempt to realize primitive life and past epochal civilization, embody a large element of travel in very interesting forms. The reader who pursues any of these lines, scientific, literary or adventurous, enlarges his horizon materially, and few kinds of reading are more useful. To know ourselves better through literature is not difficult, but to know what is not ourselves is an exceedingly hard task. It is safer to distrust one's impression of the foreign, the distant and the long past, however exact it may appear; but though the result may be imperfect, there is no better means than by intelligent and sympathetic books of travel to free the mind from the intolerance that belongs to it by nature and to lessen the narrowness inherent in race, faith and habit.

History is a province by itself, and it has been much contested whether it should be regarded more as science or more as literature. A large part of history, as it has been written in the past, nevertheless, is of literary quality, and many historians would have been tenacious of its literary rights. It is clear from the discussion that history with a literary intention has certain traits of its own. The question here is only what history should be preferred by readers whose primary interest is in literature. It is not a matter merely of rhetorical style or the mode of presentation, but of the ends sought and the

methods of construction followed by the historian. He endeavors to reproduce the past; but as the story is passed through his personality, it suffers the modification due to that medium and is recreated in certain lines of choice, insight and judgment belonging to the historian; it wears the colors of his mind. Thucydides, who first undertook to write history philosophically, presented it in a highly imaginative form, by persons and events, dramatically. Macaulay, the most absorbing modern narrator, makes of his work an impassioned plea with the conscious resources of an ancient orator, picturing the scene, making the persons alive, appealing to the sympathies of the reader. In Robertson, Prescott and Motley, history is a stately procession. The works of the more recent historians of the scientific school, however more useful they may be in the field of knowledge, do not enter popularly into literature; they may clarify the past with which they deal, but they do not permanently embody national tradition and morality ideally to anything like the same degree or in the same way as the older histories; they lack the imaginative power, and are hence ineffective in literature. The reader who makes a literary demand desires primarily the human truth of history, its course of great events shown through famous characters, or its picture of the life of cities and of the common lot given in their human phenomena; he asks for the old spectacle of men, or masses of men, doing and suffering; history has a literary interest for him in proportion as it becomes epical. Other kinds of history may be more exact and detailed, and enter upon parts of the field that dramatic and picturesque history ignores; but they have less human truth, or present truth in a less human form. Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus present this

truth in an enduring form, and no literature is more imperishable in interest; the chroniclers of the Crusades, such as Froissart, composed vivid pictures of events which they witnessed that are incomparable portrayals of character, scene and the pageantry of stirring life in their day; and the historians who have been famous in English follow this literary tradition. Gibbon was, perhaps, the greatest of them by virtue of the magnitude of his work, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." It is a great history, and though it may be corrected and supplemented by the researches of scholarship, all such labor is of the nature of a comment on the text; the work itself will never be supplanted. In proportion as the literary tradition is departed from, history relegates itself to the field of scholarship and becomes a department of scientific knowledge rather than of literature.

Philosophy in the sense of metaphysics plays but a small part in literary education, though in the comprehension of the final thought of Wordsworth, Shelley and Tennyson some tincture of philosophy, such as these poets themselves had, is required, and it is convenient in other minor parts of English poetry. Some acquaintance with Platonic conceptions is especially to be desired, because they are a part of the tradition of English poetry. But the philosophy which most supports imaginative literature is rather what is sometimes called wisdom-literature, proverbial sentences and, in general, ethical thought, playing about the nature of action, conscience, responsibility, the frailties of human nature, the issues of right and wrong, the morality of life. Such knowledge in English has mainly flowed from the Bible and passes current in the general mind without much distinction of literary stamp. Franklin and Emerson, however, are

illustrious American names in this field, and in English the type is found in Bacon's "Essays." Greater books than these are the "Imitation of Christ" and Marcus Aurelius' "Meditations," already mentioned, and on a lower plane Montaigne's "Essays." The French, unlike the English, are peculiarly rich in books of maxims, pensées and characters, and can show a long series of brilliant and talented masters in worldly and moral dicta which make a unique and characteristic part of their classic literature. The sense of the weight of meaning in the phrase, such as Burke was a master of, and of the salt of truth, is one of the last fruits of literary study and requires maturity both of mind and of experience. Such literature in an express form is consequently rarely sought by the reader for its own sake and is commonly forced on him by its fame rather than by his original liking in the first instance. Ethical knowledge is generally implicit in the reader's character and prejudices, in his instinctive judgment, and plays its part in literary appreciation involuntarily and without his being aware of it except in its results.

The essay opens a province of literature almost as broad and varied as that of the novel. It may have any subject and treat it to any end. The familiar essay in particular offers the most free play to the personality of the author, who shows his own tastes in it with naturalness and brings forward whatever of interest he has found. It also corresponds to the greatest disengagement of the reader's mind. One tires of long and serious pursuit and studious zeal in any subject; here is the opportunity for wandering, for the avocations of literature, for diversion. In the essay the author gives his companionship to the reader on a footing of friendly mutual interest

in some passing matters as in conversation. The familiar essay is best when it approaches this form of talk with the reader, and solicits him without emphasis or resistance to a brief partnership in social pleasure. The master of the mode, it would be commonly allowed, is Charles Lamb. In "Elia" there is the first requisite, a richly human personality. Lamb was a poet and a humorist, and thus yoked two elements of the most delightful play of life, sentiment and fun, in a companionable nature. He was fond of humanity and saw the spectacle of its daily affairs and its ordinary guises with sympathy that passes from laughter to pathos almost without knowing the change, so absorbing and real is the human aspect of it all; he is full of reminiscences, of life lived in his own neighborhood, even in his own home, and gives his reflections and anecdotes with intimacy; he takes the reader into his life and gives him his confidence. Even in the purely literary parts of his work he never loses the sense that the poets and the old writers of golden prose are a part of himself, and to the reader they become phases of Lamb's personality and are more valued for showing his likings than for their private worth. In every essay of "Elia," whatever the topic, it is the company of Lamb that makes the pleasure. He escapes the formality of autobiography and the fragmentariness of letters, but keeps the intimate charm of the one and the discursive happiness of the other; as one reads, it seems the talk of a man that is not quite soliloquy nor yet is it conversation, and it gives more than thought and anecdote, — it gives the presence of the man, his idiosyncrasy; the tones of his voice are felt in the cadences of the style, and the moods of his eyes in the sly humors and pathetic stops of the page. It is not strange that Lamb is so much beloved

since he has this power of silent familiarity in so penetrating and agreeable a way, and his nature was itself so refined and touched with human friendliness. It is the prime quality of the familiar essayist to be able to give himself to the reader thus and to be received. In no other author is the trait so clear.

De Quincey illustrates better the miscellaneous power of the essay and its capacity to turn itself to many uses both of instruction and entertainment. His personality is hardly less felt through the living matter and vivid style of his work than is Lamb's in his more kindly way. Here, too, the most engaging part is autobiographical; and though much of this is contained in the larger works, in particular "The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," yet this book is really a group of essays, and written in the manner of the essayist. Indeed De Quincey knew no other mode of writing, and whether his subject was metaphysics or antiquity or a tale, he made an essay of it. His recollection, mingled here and there with the text, are of the same quality as Lamb's pictures of his school days, and the theme of revery, the dream touched with sentiment, is common to both. De Quincey excels by his pictorial power, and especially in that fantasy which paints the void, and in the imaginative symbolism which belongs more properly to visible art; even when it is the mind that acts, it is the eye that dreams, as, to take the great instance, in the almost hieratic figures of "The Three Ladies of Sorrow." He excels also by his marvelous verbal eloquence, with its exquisite sonorous and melodic effects, its march of climax and question, its vivid images of figures and situations, while sound and color seem as much a part of the work as in music or painting. Such passages as are to be found in "The

Cæsars" or in "Joan of Arc" are hardly to be matched elsewhere for rich stylistic effects, and for the full flow and powerful molding of language to the uses of the voice which makes eloquence. In the miscellaneous works of De Quincey it is such passages found at random, and also the dozen pieces of various kinds of interest in which picturesqueness is sustained throughout, that stand prominently forth; but the subtlety of others, the extraordinary mental activity displayed, afford an interest hardly less absorbing to the intelligence than the better known pieces are to the imagination. De Quincey is becoming, perhaps, a somewhat neglected author, as it is quite natural that he should be; but no author better shows the versatility of the essay, its adaptability to a variously stored and widely curious mind, its supple response to a flexible hand; and in the modes of thought, color and sound he was a master of intellectual and imaginative style, while the substance of his work retains great literary power. At the end, however, he leaves, as the best essayists always do, a personal impression and the sense of intellectual companionship.

The essayists pass quickly away, because their service is for the most part a contemporary matter, engaged in observation and comment on the ideas, interests and things of the day. Carlyle, like De Quincey, begins to be disregarded. Though he wrote history, the more characteristic expression of his genius was in his earlier life in the form of the essay and of "Sartor Resartus," which is substantially and in manner the work of an essayist. He illustrates the essay of the Quarterlies that is now out of date, with its long Presbyterian wind, its omniscience, dogmatism and belligerency, but also with its high intellectual quality and sound moral fiber. In Carlyle the

type had most literary power. He made it, after the way of the essayist, the channel of his personality, and showed increasingly the eccentric and repellant traits of his temperament, to which the Teutonism of his style and matter gave at first a grotesque quality. It is likely that this trait, which hindered his acceptance by the public at the start, already proves a disqualification in the end as well, and is one reason for the lessening of his vogue. His personality is not attractive, and the dress in which it is put forth is still less so; but it is a powerful personality, and its effect is the greater because, in the main part of his characteristic work, it is through the praise and apotheosis of personality in surpassing men that it is put forth and reflected. He wrote of the hero in every part of the field, and made hero-worship a kind of initiation into his later more abstract doctrines of the divine right of force, the aristocracy of genius, the incompetency of masses, and all the rest of the reactionary gospel he preached in his violent denunciations of modern democracy. The reader need not accompany him to the end; but in the earlier great essays, such as those on Burns, Goethe, Voltaire, and the like, and more particularly in "Sartor Resartus," which is always an illuminating and invigorating book, he finds views of life and its workings in which philosophy takes more effective possession of the essay than in any other writer. It is, too, philosophy in a highly imaginative form, whether stated in a system, if one can give that name to what is hardly more than one huge metaphor, in "Sartor Resartus," or introduced as a comment in the critical biographical essays and the chapters on heroism. The interest is, of course, predominantly moral or social, but it finds literary expression, is blended with great figures and great events, with

epical elements, with surpassing characters, with human truth, and it never fails to be picturesque, fervid, glowing with conviction. The genius of Carlyle was, like De Quincey's, primarily one for expression; it is by its literary quality that his work continues to make its appeal; among the essayists he is the moralist, the social philosopher, whose material is rather human life doing and suffering than any abstract principle, and who sees it through the imagination.

Lamb, De Quincey and Carlyle illustrate the essay in the three fields of sympathy, imagination and morality, and they are excellent types of the English handling of the form which is very free. The varieties of it cannot be exhausted in a list. The tradition, perhaps, still is that the early essayists of the Queen Anne age are the classical exemplars of it, especially Addison and Steele; in both the reader feels the personality of the writer, as he also does in Goldsmith, somewhat with the intimate touch that Lamb gives, and when these three writers have human character for their subject, their charm lasts; but what really survives of them can be included in a small volume. The English scholar will be acquainted with the essay of the eighteenth century and appreciate it, but the reader will commonly spare it and turn to the quite different essayists of a later time, to the measured literary talk of Arnold or the exquisite portraits of Pater, who are the two last well-established names in England, and to Lowell and Emerson among Americans, both of whom in different ways were masters of the form. The essay keeps pace with the novel as the kind of writing that seems best suited to the uses of our public, and like that varies from instruction to mere entertainment and takes every color from the artistic to the humorous, reflecting the entire range of literary tastes and pursuits.

There are other forms of prose, but these are the main forms in which a literary value is found and sufficiently illustrate the nature of literature, the objects of its attention and the modes of its appeal in its lesser phases. In the mass of miscellaneous books there is often the characteristic material of literature and a literary treatment which make the author's work interesting, though it may not reach any high degree of distinction and may remain practically unknown. It is a common experience of the reader, especially if he have desultory habits, to find such volumes and to profit by them. It is well to read books that have an established place and authors of reputation; but an open welcome and a broad tolerance also have their advantages, and there is often a freshness in the unknown writer, a sense of discovery and a heightened interest that are lacking in the books that all men read. In books of character and observation especially, one finds this treasure-trove, which wins the reader more frequently by the wealth of its material than by the literary treatment, for a writer has often genuine matter who lacks the skill to adorn it in the telling. A plain tale, if it be originally interesting, always holds its interest. When so much is written as in our day, a great portion must have only a restricted vogue, but its excellence for those who find it is the same. In these humbler walks of literature there is much more of actual entertainment and profit than is commonly acknowledged. The interest is the same as that of a classic, though it may not be so finely embodied, and the vitalizing power is the same, though it may not be so rich. The better way is to give a hearing to every promising book, without too proud a scanning of its source and stamp, and to have familiar acquaintance with many books outside the sacred

presence of standard literature. One acquires thus a truer sense of the value of the classic, and at the same time keeps in current touch with his contemporaries; nor is he really assured of his own discrimination until he finds books for himself and knows that they are sound. The power to appreciate literature does not involve its constant exercise upon the highest examples. The essential thing is to know what makes literary quality, what are the ends and means of the art, what are the modes of intimacy with its works; when this is known — and it is best known through standard authors — the best use of the knowledge is, perhaps, not to master a past literature in its great compass and detail, but to apply it to the contemporary world in the natural course of reading what attracts our tastes and draws out our sympathies in our own time. It is natural for a book to die; few books that are old have a vital connection with life as it now is, but these if they appeal to us are favorites, the books to which one returns and that we regard as silent friends of life, comrades of our fortunes and our moods; they are strong in our affection because they are a part of our past. Such books stand apart on a shelf of their own, and are mainly classics with some humble companions; not to know literature through its length and breadth and to be wise judges in its presence, but to gather this little shelf-ful, is the best fruit of literary appreciation.

CHAPTER VII

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Literary counsel is not far to seek. The apparatus for literary study is plentiful; manuals, histories, commentaries and guides to the choice of books exist in profusion. There is an embarrassment of such riches. The objection to these is that, of the two traditional ends of literature, to please and to instruct, they take note too exclusively of the second. The two ends should not be made to neutralize each other; yet this is often the case. Excess of instruction leads to one's being bored; excess of pleasure leads to frivolity. It is, perhaps, better to consider the process rather than the ends. Literature is a key to one's own heart; it is also a key to the lives of others; there are other ways of learning one's own nature and human nature in general, but outside of direct experience and observation literature is the principal means of obtaining knowledge of human life. The most efficient form of the knowledge is that which art gives, storing it in typical examples in imaginative literature; but it also is found where art is imperfectly applied, as in the subsidiary forms of literature, or even where art is absent and truth is set forth barely and abstractly. Imaginative art condenses and recreates experience in order to clarify it for the reason and magnetize it for the affections and sympathies. It seeks to include all of life and know it in its essentials. Instruction proceeds from the matter,

pleasure from the form. The definition is somewhat narrow, however, and too antithetical, taking too exclusive note of merely esthetic pleasure, whereas the pleasure arising from literature springs also from other than formal sources and is mixed of many kinds. The knowledge of human life is antecedent to the pleasure flowing from such knowledge in any form, and is the condition without which there can be no pleasure. The acquisition and interpretation of experience is the core of the process, which looks to a broad comprehension and penetration of the nature of humanity and its career in the past and the present. The starting point, however, is the individual, the reader himself. It is this fact that makes it difficult to lay down a definite rule in literary study. The personality of the reader is never to be lost sight of. He has special aptitudes and tastes which make one book rather than another, one kind of literature rather than another, one epoch rather than another, a better mode of access to experience, a stronger stimulus to the imagination, a more vitalizing power to his whole being. Literature unlocks power of life in the individual as well as gives knowledge of life; it is best, in any instance, when the two are one act and the knowledge is given by the unlocking of power and as a consequence of it. The personality of the individual is the prime element in determining what is best for his growth in order that there may always be the greatest vital connection in his study of life between himself and his instruments; they should be, as it were, extensions of his own power, outgrowths of himself. It is wise for the reader, therefore, to have a large share of self-respect, to prefer his own natural choices, to give latitude to his own wandering tastes, to indulge his own character. He will give a fair trial to

poetry and prose, to this or that author, especially when recommended by long reputation and the judgment of generations, but, in the end, he will read or not read according as he finds his own account in it. The good reader is one who never abdicates; with him rests the decision in his own case. Though appearances may be against him, though he may remain long or even always in a lower range of taste and a narrower sphere of knowledge, it is better so than that he should default to himself. He cannot profitably get ahead, in his reading, of the man he is; he cannot out-race his own shadow on life; he must build knowledge, experience, feeling, his world, in his own image, interpreting what is new by his own past and passing from the man he is to the man he may become by successive and natural stages of self-development. Self-reliance, to trust one's own nature, is as radical a necessity in literary study as in other parts of life; it is the best way of man-making.

It has already been remarked that the simplest approach to literature is by means of the books nearest to the reader, which are in the main those of his own time and of the next preceding age. He is thus introduced to the living ideas and most vivid interests of humanity in the world in which he has to live. An exception should be made of the greatest books of world literature, but the exception is often more apparent than real. In their universal appeal these books are contemporary with every age. "Don Quixote," the "Iliad," Dante's "Divine Comedy," for example, should be read in early life; such books are landmarks of the intellectual life and give proportion to all later reading; others, like Plutarch's "Lives" and Gibbon's "History," should also be read in youth, and they have the advantage of giving a vast amount of

human history at a single stroke, expanding and storing the mind wonderfully with a sense of the extent and majestic movement of man's historic career. To read these works, whether of fiction, poetry, or history, is, at the time, an intellectual feat, and as conducive to confidence and vigor in the intellectual part of youth as winning a cup or turning the tide of a game in its physical part. It is immaterial to what degree the works be comprehended in their fullness and power; the reader takes what he can of them, and though he were a mature man he can do no more, for no one exhausts their richness; it is sufficient that in his youth he be in touch with life in its greatness, and there is besides a power in the years of boyhood to give charm to such literature that is missed if it be read too late. The youth reads everything as romance, such is his mental freshness and the warmth of life in him and the fascination of the discovery of the scene of life and its doings. In the biography of the boyhood of genius such books continually crop out as the great events and revealing moments of the boy's life, those from which he dates his emergence into the world of men, his consciousness of the powers within and about him, his awakening; and what takes place in the boyhood of genius measurably occurs in ordinary youth placed in the same circumstances. The great books of the world should be put into the hands of youth at the earliest possible time.

In the case of works of less eminence the natural way is to read English books, and, in particular, those of the last century. A so-called course of reading of any sort is seldom a very good mode of procedure. It is better to read single authors that attract the reader, to read a good deal of one author at a time, to become familiar with him and his interests in life, as shown in his books, and with

his ideas. If one has appropriated a few books thus with vivacity of interest and vigor of mind, if one has made friends with a few authors so as to know and love them and prize them, he has learned the first secret, however unconsciously, and mastered the power of appreciation. The rest is only a repetition of the process as new authors come into the field of attention and new tastes and interests develop within and the old grow and fructify. In such a way of reading enthusiasm should be an increasing trait, and enjoyment also. The value of a few authors well known and liked is greater to the mind than that of many authors imperfectly mastered; it is what friendship is to mere acquaintance in society. A course of reading in the ordinary sense, as of the nineteenth-century poets, for example, has its principal convenience in the ample opportunity it gives the reader for such a private selection, but he should consign his fortunes to his own choices or seek only such guidance as may serve to direct him to new lines of attention, to open ideas to him, to exercise his reflection in fresh ways and to give him the sense of sympathy in his pleasures and support in them. It is the reader who reads the book, and what he puts into it is unknown to any one else except by an intuitive sympathy; the reaction of his own past on the book is often the most living part of its value to him; he should be left much to himself, or if not so left he should keep much to himself. The best readers in colleges are those who take their own way somewhat carelessly but obstinately like Calverley and Emerson. After a while the spheres of the favorite authors who are known and prized will begin to grow more inclusive; the authors will gather into groups, the Lake School, the brotherhood of Keats and Shelley, the neo-pagans, as the case may be, and the groups will

begin to coalesce into the romantic movement as a whole. When this stage is reached, the time has come for such aid as literary histories can give in tracing the connections of the age, drawing out the general traits, the historic position, the antecedents of the whole; such information, though it belongs to history, is an aid to the fuller and especially the more intelligent appreciation of the authors. It is, however, the authors that should be in the foreground of early literary study, and not the period or the movement which embraces them, so far at least as the characteristic literary power plays a part in self-education.

It is by no means necessary to restrict one's choice of books within nearly contemporary literature until the whole is grasped as a historical period. It is better to take the great authors first, who give scale to their contemporaries and to time; to know Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Pope, Gray, among the poets, and Bacon, Swift, Fielding, Goldsmith, Burke among the prose writers. The rule is to know first the greatest of all and to be familiar with them. In English it is of little utility to ascend higher than the Elizabethan age. Chaucer is a great writer, but to all intents and purposes his language is a past dialect of English, and to the general reader is unintelligible; outside of Chaucer early English literature has only a scholastic interest. It is agreeable, even if one should never command justly a whole period of English, to make acquaintance with some minor period, or rather group, and to know it with thoroughness. The Lake School, or the Queen Anne essayists, or the religious writers of the seventeenth century, or the cavalier poets, or Dr. Johnson's circle, are examples; intimate knowledge of such a group, with which the reader has a nat-

ural sympathy, discloses attractiveness and significance in literature in quite a different way from its appreciation in single authors, and to have such an acquaintance with a group is a mental satisfaction. The minor literature of both prose and poetry in English can be easily controlled in books of selections, either confined to a single author, as in the case of Swift, or in anthologies, as in the case of the Elizabethan lyric. In general, it is undesirable to confine one's choice either to prose or poetry, or to any one kind of literature; fiction should alternate with drama, and the essay with the lyric, since the complexion of life is thus better preserved and wholeness of literary taste secured. Neither should one read the classics always, and think time wasted if bestowed on less imposing books; it is as if one were to make the week one eternal Sabbath. One cannot in literature any more than in life live at the top of his forces; and whether it be "the difficult air of the iced mountain top" or the breath of Arcady that the reader inhales, he must be content with a less refined mental diet and common books. Humbler literature has also its place, practically, in life, and discharges the function of literature, to enlighten and console, with wide effectiveness.

The manner of reading which has been indicated might not make a man a scholar in English literature; but it is assumed that what the reader desires is the power of literature and not knowledge of it in itself. If one desires the knowledge of it, he approaches it scholastically through dictionaries, manuals, histories, the hundred varieties of comment. A certain degree of knowledge is serviceable; but if much is required to make a book intelligible, it is practically a dead book for the general reader. Literary history is the most untrustworthy form

of history, and is to be read with much dubiousness; the subject is complex and involves many intangible elements. The shorter it is and the more confined to a tabulation of external fact and well made out general traits, the more useful it is to the reader. The other illumination that he may desire is better found in the essays of appreciative critics like Lamb or acute commentators like Coleridge, in biographies strongly personal in their narrative, and in the history of social manners, the fund of reminiscence and other side-lights which make us acquainted with such a group as that of Pope or of Johnson. The reading of memoirs, generally, is a great aid to literary study since they present the facts in a strongly human form. It is human truth that is the great subject of literature; it is the scene and play and fortune of life itself; and to substitute literary history for it, as a matter of lives, dates, periods, movements, and styles, and social and political phenomena and the like, is as if in art one were to read manuals and catalogues and theories of perception instead of looking at pictures and statues. It is true that the education of the eye and heart by contemplation of visible beauty is a subtle thing; so is the education of the soul by literature; but it is a very real thing, well-nigh omnipresent in life; and it issues not in information, however detailed and well-ordered, about the thing, but in insight into life and fate, in sympathy with whatever is human, in apprehension of what seems the divine, — issues, that is, in the greater power to live. This, and not mere instruction, is the end of literature; and this, and not mere information, is the end of literary study.

The approach to foreign literature, outside of the universal works already mentioned, is a more difficult matter; yet to know English literature alone is like know-

ing English history without the history of the continent, and it is the more defective because foreign elements enter strongly into English literature which has displayed great assimilative and sympathetic power with regard to the literature of other lands. The question of translations is to be met at the threshold. Greatly as opinions differ on the subject, it is useless for the reader to suppose that even in the best translations he gets either the original work or its equivalent, as a form of art or in its native meaning to its own people. In poetry, more particularly, he gets only a diminished glory; to read a great poet in a translation is like seeing the sun through smoked glass. There is a double obstacle; the form itself is untranslatable, the melodic mold of life in language; and, in addition, the native temperament, mixed of race, circumstances and long tradition, is assumed in the poem to be in alliance with it, to respond to and support it and assist in its understanding, and the more national the work the greater is its reliance on this suggestiveness, which is only completed in meaning and reach by the power of the race, its intuition, its ideals, its associations, all that is unspoken in it passing into the poem and becoming a silent but potent language there. To understand a canzone of Dante or of Leopardi one must feel as an Italian feels; to appreciate its form he must know the music of the form as only the Italian language can hold and eternize it. Translation is impotent to overcome either of these difficulties; at the best it yields an imperfect rendering of both form and meaning, making an indifferent appeal by inferior means; generally in the translation of a great classic the uninstructed mind naïvely wonders why it was ever thought great. Prose suffers less than poetry, it is true, but the case of "Don Quixote," perhaps the most

untranslatable of prose works though many times attempted, shows the presence there of the same difficulty.

The natural approach to foreign literature is through those portions of it which have a near tie to English. The fundamental tradition of English poetry, on its foreign side, is classical in its sources and is continued by the medium of the South mainly by Italian literature. Greece and Italy have contributed most to English poetry; familiarity with their literature and the Latin, which naturally binds them and is intermediary, is most useful to the reader in his study of English, and also most easy in the expansion of his interest beyond the domain of English. Greek is so fundamental in our culture that it is hardly possible to overestimate its importance. Whenever the reader finds anything about Greece that he has not read, it is a safe rule to read it; he is sure to find it useful. Whether in the form of direct translations or of those scholarly interpretations of the Greek genius, literary, artistic, and social, in which English is uncommonly rich, the study of the Greek is a means of growth in literary power and in command of literary methods and points of view, more valuable by far than is the case with any single literature of the later world. Its usefulness in the drama has already been mentioned; but it illustrates every poetic form with brilliant examples and is hardly less universal in prose. The novel, in its perfection, was a later product; other kinds of narrative, however, were practised with unsurpassed skill; and, speaking generally, Greek prose is unrivaled in beauty, while in matter it is full of wisdom that grows not old. The Greek is full of ideas and deeply engaged with them, and in intellectual interest is on a parity with modern literatures. The more the reader enters into these writ-

ings, the more he wonders at the intelligence of that people and at the amount of their literature which is still modern in interest, whether as a picture of life or as a discussion of truth or for simply esthetic qualities. Greece is the most interesting country of all in a human way, and excelled all in the art of literature, which is the most human of the arts. The more familiar the reader becomes with Greek books, and with the ideals of the people that produced them, and the more he is able to take the intellectual and esthetic mold of the Greek into his own mind and have Greek habits of perception, the better is he fitted for literary appreciation of any kind; he has the criteria of judgment planted in himself and carries them about implicit in his mind. It is for this reason that in literature classical education was so efficient in the past; it developed much that underlies literature and makes it instinctive. The reader, though not classically educated, can still regain for himself a certain part of this lost benefit, by attention to Greek; the literature is in itself of the highest interest, and mastery of it gives also an understanding and command of the literatures that grew out of it in later days, which nothing else can replace.

Next to Greek the Italian is most important, both in connection with English poetry, which has often been in close touch with it, and for its own poetic value; but Italian literature need not be so thoroughly known as the Greek. In general, English acquaintance with it is confined to the few famous poets and one or two prose writers. Italian literature is very extensive and is of a high degree of culture, but it is not easily appreciated unless the reader has an acquaintance with the country itself and a love of the people that comes from personal

contact. The Latin literature, also, is to be known rather by a few great writers than in its broad extent. It is best approached through French critics, who present it with more intelligence than other scholars and with the comprehension of minds native to it. Finally, French literature is the most useful in the modern field, both for the abundance and vigor of its ideas and for entertainment, for the scope of its view of life and the world and its skill in the literary interpretation of life through imagination and reflection. Paris is still the intellectual center of Europe, of ideas and the pleasures of a refined culture of every sort, and in French is found the best practice of the literary art in the modern world. Though sporadic writers of genius are scattered here and there through Europe, it is in France that the art is most surely sustained, most variously illustrated, and fills the largest sphere. Its literature in the past, too, is one of the most splendid in the world; for centuries it has not failed in greatness in any age. It is nearer in temperament and substance to the English than is the Italian, and therefore more accessible, and a comprehensive study of it is the most substantially fruitful of all foreign study, though it is less formative than the Greek. The German literature has had but slight contact with English, and that not important; though kindred in language and to a less extent in race, the English is by its culture nearer to the southern and Latin peoples, and much that is characteristically German finds scant welcome in English tastes. Carlyle illustrates what disqualifications a native writer may acquire by being Teutonized in matter and style. German literature has but few great works, and though it had one flourishing period during which it gave world-currency to its ideas, it is rather by its philosophy than

by its imagination that the German genius has affected other nations and found expression for itself. The English reader naturally looks toward France, Italy, and Greece, and is more sympathetic with Spain and the Orient than with the north and east of Europe. It is only by the novel, which in a sense has become independent of nationality, that foreign literatures outside those mentioned are practically known.

In conclusion, to summarize most briefly what has been said, the prime consideration in the whole field of literary appreciation is to avoid making literary study a study of something else. Nothing is more common in practise than to do this. All knowledge that exercises the mind is useful in its own way; but culture and not learning is the true end of literary study. It is a power of life that is sought, "more life and fuller that we want." Imaginative literature is a great resource for such growth; to live over again the vivid moments of life, as they are set forth by the poets, the dramatists and the novelists, to see the procession of historic life in its great events and the constitution of man in its surpassing characters and its crises of fate and passion, to know the human truth of life in whatever form, is the end in view. It is, therefore, a fatal diversion of interest to attend to the facts of literary history, to biographical and social detail, to discussion of the problems involved, and in general to substitute the comment for the text. Such study should be kept strictly subsidiary to the elucidation of the matter, and so far as possible should be dispensed with. The question is not how much the reader can know about the work, the author and the age, but whether he truly responds to the poem, romance, or essay, and finds there an expansion of his consciousness of life, a stimulation of his own powers,

an inner light for his own soul. He should avoid the comment in all its forms, so far as is possible, and give himself to the work.

Secondly, he should take the greatest masters first, in the order in which interest in them naturally arises in his mind. Some reasons for this have already been given. The main reason, however, is that in their works the great and commanding features of life, its contour both as romance, fate and character, its moral geography, are to be found. One who has read the Hebrew prophets, the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare has a view of the essentials of life in its greatness that requires little supplementing; his reading thereafter is for definition and detail, for the temporal modeling of life in different periods and races and nations, for the illumination of it in exceptional men and women and in high types of character or romantic circumstances; it is, in general, rather verification of old truth than anything more that he finds. In this sense the great writers suffice of themselves, if they be thoroughly known, without the need of reading many books; this is often to be observed in life, for it is not needful to read much but to read well; yet it is only in maturity that the depth and power of life in the great writers is realized, and the way in which they summarize and contain the lesser multitudinous books of their time, and become lasting memorials of man's life in their age, is understood. If these writers are early known a longer time is given for the development of this richer meaning that only familiarity and the passage of time can bring out of the page.

Lastly, as was said at the beginning, literature is a means of extending and interpreting experience so that the reader by mental growth may become more truly man

by including in his view the compass of man's life and developing in himself the powers of response to it that he possesses; it exists for the use of the individual in self-development. This is the point of view that has been maintained with perhaps wearisome iteration in these chapters. It is the personal appeal of literature that has been dwelt on as being its characteristic value in culture. Personality is the genius of life. It is natural, therefore, that those books should be preferred in which the personal appeal is strongest, and this has been indicated as being the right choice of the reader; and also those books should be preferred in which the matter is put forth in the most personal form, whether by the creative power of the imagination in the greater kinds of literature or by the power of narrative and criticism in its lesser forms. In this way life is seen most vividly, picturesquely and with human excitement; life yields itself most richly in the forms of romance, whether in imagination or in fact. Personality in the presentation does not involve any diminution of the truth. It is mental truth, not material fact, that literature gives; literature is careless of fact as such, it is nothing whether the thing was actual; the reader must learn to live in the mind and not in the senses, in principles and not in facts, in ideal reality as it is to the shaping mind and the dreaming heart of the writer; and even when the traveler relates an adventure or describes a landscape before his eyes, it is by an ideal element in it that he makes the true appeal. Ideal truth has its best embodiment in a person and the human events that happen to him. Life is then at its high tide. Study has great deadening power over life; and when the reader finds this deadening influence in his pursuit of literature, when personality begins to fade from the page, and the

abstract, the parasitical, the fact encroach, and literature becomes rather a form of knowledge than of life, then he is losing the proper good of literature; and he should seek again in himself and his authors the vitality of a personal touch, the connection of life, the power of human truth. The great thing is to remain alive, in one's reading, and nowhere should the principle of life be more sacredly guarded than in its most immortal presence, — imaginative literature and those other forms that take their color from its human methods.

AMERICA IN LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS

EVERYTHING begins in the middle — to adapt a wise saying — like an epic poem. That is the central truth of human perspective. Open history where you will, and there are always men streaming over the mountains or the sea from some horizon, bringing with them arms and cattle, battle-songs and prayers, and an imaginary world; their best treasure is ever the seed of some last year's harvest. Colonialism is a word too often used to disparage the thing; it is the natural condition of the outposts of man's spread over the earth; the wave, as it breaks on new shores, is salt with time. England was colonized, and Greece and India. So our ancestors, the first Americans, brought with them the past as well as the future to this land. It is not often that books make an important item in the cargo of an emigrant ship. The mother-tongue is brought, and in it is the great sap of thought, aspiration, and resolve that shall feed institutions of Church and State as they arise; but the book-language is, in the main, left at home; it is the mouth-language, where literature is in the making, that will be used on the new soil.

The pure literary influence in all our early colonies, the impact of the book-past of England, was slightest at the South and strengthened with the northing. In Virginia, generally, the first estates were naturally as innocent of learning as Osbaldistone Hall; there was a countrified indifference to it befitting a young squirarchy, a touch of

contempt felt with old-fashioned English frankness, even a dull hatred of enlightenment, as when the Governor thanked God that there were "no free schools nor printing," and hoped there would be none for a hundred years. "God keep us from both!" he cried. At the other focus of the settlement, in New England, a different state of affairs prevailed, though there, too, the pure literary influence was narrowly limited. But as in the dawn of England "Beowulf" had come in the long Danish boats, and many an exodus has gone out with one great book which was like brain and blood to the little race, there on Massachusetts Bay a book had come with the people; and every ship, loaded out of the twenty thousand souls of the first immigration, brought it — the book that has oftenest crossed the sea of all the books of men — the Bible. It is the greatest English book, and in this small folk of English stock it found a human vehicle of power equal to its greatness.

This nest of Puritans is commonly thought of as deficient in that large part of the human genius which is enlightened by letters, — as unimaginative; and because they did not flower out with polite literature they are said to be unliterary. Yet the Puritan line in England was constituted of Spenser, Milton, and Bunyan, the most purely imaginative minds of their generations for a century of English life; though it should be observed that in these instances the imagination moved in molds already prepared for it. The Puritans, being of the stock they were, could not but be imaginative, romantic, intense, in vision, emotion, and idea; they were high-charged with all this energy; but the channels were prepared for it, and they found their literature in the Bible. If they required songs of praise, they "rolled the hymn to wintry skies"; if

they sought expression for humiliation, or desired to illustrate their fortunes or passions, their sins, trials, and deliverances, there was the typical narrative and drama of human life, as they knew it, in the Scriptures; they turned to their one book, and more frequently, as their descendants now turn to whole libraries, and found in it the mirror of life. The Bible was, indeed, to use the language of to-day, like a great literary trust; it supplied all wants and forbade competition. Such a book, when it takes hold of a people so completely and intimately and fills the measure of their spiritual energy, needs to recede before men will again attempt originally the task it performs, as Shakespeare must recede before dramatic imagination can flourish with equal new power; for, though books are not seldom the seeds of revolution, a great book is normally a powerful conservative force, a true bond of national life.

It is, however, wide of the mark to describe a people to whom the Old Testament was more thoroughly known than Homer to the young Greeks and the New Testament more familiar than Victor Hugo to young France, as an unliterary people. If it be the function of literature to lift the thoughts of men, to educate the emotions, to shape character towards ideal ends, to exalt and to console, and always to minister to the spirit in its walk on earth, the Bible discharged this office in the early generation of the New England settlements with an adequacy, a constancy, a penetration, a completeness of efficacy such as is hardly to be paralleled in history. It was their rubric of prayer, their lyric of praise, the parable of their morality, and they adapted it to be the epic of their growing state where they, too, were a chosen people of God planted in the wilderness. This was its popular significance.

It bred a learned and scholarly clergy besides, vast producers of sermons, controversial tractates and speculative treatises in theology, such that, if the book had been secular, the age would have been named Alexandrian; and it enforced that respect for learning and the literary faculty which has never ceased in that region, as it also made the people a lettered people by the mere necessity that it should be read by all, just as the right to vote is making the nation at large now a lettered nation. It may seem like reheating old fires to discourse in this way of the place of the Bible in our beginnings; but it is essential for a true comprehension of our early life and letters, and the relationship between them, to see in these first generations not a dull, darkened, unimaginative folk, but, in a true sense, one of the most literary states that ever existed, having its most passionate and intense life in a book as simple and significant to it as the Koran to Islam, and as much richer than the Koran in art and truth as the Christian life exceeds the Moslem faith. To think of the old sermons and treatises as the first American literature is like speaking of the commentaries on Shakespeare and omitting the poet. The Bible was the book in which the first Americans found what literature has to give to the hearts of the people, and in it they had their full and overflowing literary, nor should one hesitate to say their artistic life.

And what was this life that the Puritans led with this book for their brain and heart? We have their prayers, sweet and solemn in the cadences better known to us now in the English Prayer-book; we have the letters of their wives, like Mrs. Winthrop's, mingling human affection with divine love, as if these New England mothers were also nuns of Christ's cloister; we have their sermons, now

terse and tense and studded with learning better known to us in Milton, now with the flowing amplitude and eloquence that to our ears is Taylor's, or with the vivid realism of vision that to our eyes is Bunyan's limning on the darkness; we have the words, but the light to read them by is gone.

The clergy themselves are stiff to us as their portraits — all wig and gown and wooden smiles — and when we think of them it is most often as fire-breathing dragons, perhaps; yet they were, as is well known, men of great power of character, with some of what seem the lost graces of greatness, immense intellectual vigor, moral authority, dignity, the scholar's refinement, sanctity even; and, if we are to judge by what their friends said of them — and how else shall we judge? — in some few, at least, all the poison of human nature had gone out of them into their creed and left only angelic sweetness in their souls; nor is it only in Puritanism that such a miracle has been wrought, but it is found in intense religious life elsewhere. The people who sat under their teaching are also far away in the past, so marked in their double consciousness, as it were; on the one side, absorbed in practical affairs, fighting, exploring, debating, building all things new; on the other, absorbed in spiritual self-scrutiny, despairing, hoping, doubting; so sure in every touch on this world with axe and plough and gun, yet within living in the world to come, with the dreadful uncertainty which world it would be. One sees the little towns of low houses dotting the coast, the clearings landward, the few boats by the shore, the deep woods all about, only the trail or the river for roads — a wilderness silent and dark, the summer heat on the sparse corn, the winter drift over all; peril always near, subsistence often uncertain, a hard and trying

physical life. Yet here, as always where life is great, spiritual life was the one reality in the midst of this stubborn fact. We cannot see clearly into that darkness. Perhaps some echoes of that life may come to us in Scott's Covenanters, or in the romance in which Hawthorne transposed its music, but it comes faintly; only the imagination would be equal to telling us, and the secret is lost. The heart of the Puritan is a closed book. The sermons, the diaries, the portraits, the so-called colonial literature, will not interpret it; they are as much in the twilight of antiquity as Anglo-Saxon chronicles and riddles; they are the grave-clothes left behind, but the spirit, our brother and master, is gone.

The silence that has fallen on the Puritan imagination, meditation, and passion is, nevertheless, not an abnormal thing. Something similar is always happening in our experience. As life rises to expression in us, and among men at large to whom literature is a living power, energy of thought and emotion is draughted off through the established hereditary mediums, through Shakespeare, Scott, Dickens, and leaves no original trace of itself. The life which is led through literature — and it is always large in a reading people such as ours — has its superficial swirl and froth like the ocean, its thousand-tongued clamor of books of the hour; but its deep currents are silent, as the influence of the writers just named with myriads of thousands of annual readers reminds us. The Bible is still the great Gulf Stream in the literary consciousness of English people, and their life is daily expressed through its language and imagery and ideals, the actual life of each day from matins to vespers; but it is a life on which, as of old, silence falls at the day's end. It leaves no original record of itself in new literature, just

as the vitality of impulse, sympathy, and world-hope, which expresses itself in us by an appropriation of the genius of Burns, Shelley, or Tennyson to our own uses, burns out without shaping new molds for others.

There is an original expression which creates literature and is individualistic; but it is rather in this sympathetic expression, which appropriates literature and is social, that popular literary life lies, and the latter may flourish abundantly when the former seems dead. Such was the case with the Puritan genius; it used literature of the highest quality, but it produced none, realizing, it is curious to observe, the literary ideal of Plato's Republic, where a traditional, conservative, and sacred poetry was to reign, excluding any new individual expression.

The chief end of literature as the expression of life being thus anticipated and provided for, and the main stream of intense experience, out of which the creative impulse comes, being directed through these hereditary Scriptural channels, there was left for the new American speech only the less essential things, the fringes of this life in its higher spiritual manifestation, and especially the whole of the lower plane of material affairs, the contemporaneous record of events, and, in a word, the environment.

Here, too, the religious life sent its rays from the center out into the mortal field. There was an aura, for example, of special providences that filled the whole heaven round the settlements, not with the aloofness of miracle, but with a homely, hand-to-mouth nearness, so that the gray goose which John Dane shot on Ipswich River could not fall from the sky for his dinner except as the sparrow falls. No doubt the goose was as real to him as Elijah's ravens; and such a trifle best illustrates the omnipresent

nearness of Providence in the people's thought, as close with the helping hand as with the all-seeing eye. There was by night another aura, too, of darkness from the pit, that made the Essex woods gloom and creak with the Sabbath of witches, and gave Salem its nightmare year. The nearness of the devil was as natural as the nearness of God; and if lost men in the woods or on the sea or on ice-floes take their hunter's luck as providential, as they commonly do, it is as instinctive in human nature to feel in the sense of peril in the wilderness, in the slightness of life-shelter there, some diabolism in the shades. But while remarkable providences and witchcraft delusions are the most sensational phases of the record of our early annalists and diarists, the best part of it lies in its realistic story of the life of the times, its anecdotes of personal adventure, Indian captivity and escape, explorations, voyages on the rivers and coastwise, the shipwrecks, like that marvelous one of Thacher and Avery, the surprising deliverances, all the chronicle of pioneer life.

Here the old English speech, still smacking of the times of great Elizabeth, hardens the knotty story with rude oaken strength, and discloses the individual primitive force, the daring, the resource and resolution of the transplanted stock, with picturesque and deep-bitten realism in every scene. It is primarily a literature of character in the raw state that thus sprang up, with adventure as its mode of presentation; it is the stamped life of the time, that has proved more permanent because it was written down, but it is only fragments of that life whose living speech was so much more abundant and made the topic of secular interest round every meeting-house, in all the taverns, and by the great, blazing hearths of the whole country-side.

Historians, in their turn, took up the tale and composed the early annals of the New World, always with a pride in the land, and some thought of it as an oasis of God in His dealing with mankind, a sense that it was a place of deliverance, their very own, God's grant, the King's realm rather by legal courtesy than of right; the divine right, indeed, was in themselves, not in the King. The narrative itself is meager and concerns simple things; but the spirit of it contained the political future. So, life beginning now to be long in the land, and the scattered settlements to multiply and knit together with a broader inclusion of common mundane interests, commerce springing up and spreading southward to the West Indies, and wealth from home produce and foreign exchange making rich citizens in the principal towns, that movement of secularization set in which was the result of this growing diversity in employment, outlook, and ambition, and the world was more and more, and its problems assertive of their privilege to be first and its ways of their right to be commanding. There was a fading-out of the old fervor, a reactionary wave of the great awakening in religion, but the lessening oscillations showed that the element of religion had shrunk again to be only a part of life, and not the leading public part now. The clergy and the magistrates were less in alliance, as one power of the State, and the former had lost place. They had left a few memorable names for landmarks — Eliot, Cotton Mather, Edwards, among the chief — and some folios, the "Magnalia" the first; but the Puritan age was gone, the land was settled, the main interest of the people was secular, questions of trade and taxes came forward, and, foremost of all, the question of government. If literature in the first century was mainly one that came home to

men's bosoms, it was now one that came home to their business. Perhaps the illustrative moment of the change is best arrested in Franklin's boyhood, when he stayed at home from evening meeting on the Sabbath, not without some misgiving, because he could make a better use of his time in study.

The founding of a greater State than the Puritan commonwealth was now in hand, and the basis of it was broader in the roots of the nation among the dispersed colonies. The general complexion of the literature which set forth the growth of the environment of the new American life was the same in all the colonies; a similar record would be made later in the winning of the West, experience vividly felt being transcribed in the words of those who did or closely observed the deeds; and in these generations of the first conquest of the wilderness, Colonel Norwood's narrative in the South was of the same stripe as such memorabilia were to be everywhere. Yet in the North, owing to the greater strength of the literary habit, a certain primacy remained in importance and fullness. In the new political development this would no longer be the case. The great documents of this literature, the Declaration and the Constitution, were written to the southward, though they were the product of the general sense of all; and round about them the writings of Jefferson, Adams, Madison, Paine, Otis, and their fellows clustered as a literature of interpretation of the great ideas they embodied, in a manner somewhat analogous to the way in which the sermons of the old clergy gathered around the Scriptures. Oratory had sprung up in the general forum, and belonged, like the newspapers, to the troubled times; and having great ideas to feed on, and being electrified by passion, it began that remarkable

career which had its climax in Webster and only died in Phillips.

The political literature of the Revolution was the great achievement of the age in the intellectual sphere; and it was so great as it was because from the hour when its immortal classic, the Declaration, was read by Washington's order at the head of every regiment, the practical energy of the new-born nation went into it completely, engaged in the labor of applying to life those ideas of free government which had become the absorbing thought and emotion of the people, both in battle and in council; and, moreover, not only were the ideas themselves of commanding power, but they were set forth in words and bodied forth in institutions by great characters. Washington's "Farewell Address" is rightly reckoned a monument of the time scarcely inferior in dignity to the two instruments that preceded it; and one great book of government, "The Federalist," summed up the broad national thought.

In these writings, distinctively, was the literary outburst of life, as it then sought expression in language, imagery, and ideas of public liberty, as directly, pervasively, and energetically as in the Puritan commonwealth in the earlier age it had found utterance in the language and imagery and ideals of the Bible; it was here as thoroughly political as it had before been religious; but here, too, it is life expressed in literature, though now the form is original and indigenous. The first great contact of life and letters in America was through religious passion in inherited forms of speech; the second great contact was through political passion, and created a new literature for itself; between the two lay the literature, always more or less in evidence, describing the environ-

ment of life and its events realistically, or summing it up in history or annals. Such, in few words, is the story of the interaction of American life and letters in their vital connection in the colonial times.

Is it too brief a tale, too scant in names and titles, too little diversified? Does it slight academic definitions, preconceptions of the bibliographer and antiquarian, the received traditions of our colonial literature which has so swelled in bulk by the labors of our literary historians in the last thirty years of local research? What of "The Day of Doom," "The New England Primer," and "Poor Richard's Almanack," and the other wooden worthies of our Noah's Ark, survivors from the Flood, archaic idols? These are relics of a literary fetichism. They do not belong with the books that become the classics of a nation. They are not necessarily remembered. Their being mentioned at all denotes the scarcity of colonial books that can be brought, even by charity, under the head of literature in its polite sense.

The contact of the colonists with elegant letters, as imported from England, was also inconspicuous. It is true that William Hathorne, the ancestor of the romancer, brought over Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia," and the thought of that stern captain and orator of the Puritan assembly reading the lore of the shepherd-knights of love in the far different wild of Salem, fills one with amazement; but the fact is significant of the kind of touch with England then maintained, and not through the scholars of the old-home Cambridge alone. Spenser was also known, and Du Bartas; and, as time went on, the Puritan literature came over — Milton and Bunyan, and then Cowper, the characteristic books to be found in New England homes at the end of the period, and long after-

wards the familiar books of the house there. But those who felt the literary impulse from the imported writings were few and achieved nothing; gather up their slender compositions as we may with pious care, it is only for reburial. The fertilizing power of such books was long delayed, so long as to bring the English eighteenth century nearer to us than it is to Englishmen; for Addison, who first was felt in Irving, is still perceptible in Curtis, and Holmes hardly escaped being one of Pope's imitators. It is only one hidebound in academic prejudice who could treat such a rill of Parnassus as imitative colonial verse, as a matter of any importance in our literature. The people were a prose people, who had both their practical and spiritual life in prose; what was to them the substance of poetry in their lives was clothed in prose, however exalted with the rhythm of deep, natural feeling; their very hymns had lost the sense of poetic form. They had, in truth, forgotten poetry; the perception of it as a noble and exquisite form of language had gone from them, nor did it come back till Bryant recaptured, for the first time, its grander lines at the same time that he gave landscape to the virgin horizons of his country.

Slowly, however, the ground was prepared for literature in the narrower sense; it was the last of the great natural functions of a civilized State to revive on the new soil; even now it is only with reservations that it can be said to have reached the dignity of a distinct profession among us. The clergy and the statesmen used it only as a tool in their own crafts for ulterior ends; they did not value it as an art capable of products that belong only to itself. There was no place for the man of letters in the social arrangement; there was no market for his wares in the social economy; religious and political ideals were sup-

plied in abundance, and no need was felt for other ideals; and, as for entertainment, it was a hard-working world, this young America, fully employed with its material tasks in subduing the soil, advancing the border, establishing trade, manufacture, and commerce, founding institutions, planting the State in all ways. Communication spread through the colonies, which drew together, but this communication was ecclesiastical, mercantile, political; and, in fact, it was scientific before it was literary. The first class, too, that developed wealth was a burgher commercial class, whose indulgence was in articles of costly merchandise, in luxuries of the house and dress, in comfortable living; the old Tory class, materialized with new riches and interested in the old order as one in which they were substantial citizens. Letters have seldom flourished in such an environment. It was not until the prosperous times after the Revolution, in a wider and more varied world, that signs of literary consciousness can be discerned. In the newspapers there began to be indications of literary ambition, and in the publications that were late fruits of the periodical movement in the English eighteenth century there were signs of literary breeding, but the minds of the contributors fed on the husks of a foreign taste. The presses of Philadelphia and Wilmington had reprinted English books, and English radicalism was early welcomed and had a living contemporary impetus; Mary Wollstonecraft's books, for example, were issued and had influence.

There was a rapid expansion in the field of books; readers increased in numbers; a demand arose for works current in the mother-country, as well as for standard authors of the closing century. Perhaps the clearest sign of the coming revival was to be seen in the first public

libraries, called social libraries, that sprang up in the New England coast towns and were considerable collections for general use. Their catalogues show what books were read; and, while they contain a large proportion of religious works, manuals of counsel for parents and youth, serious meditative discourses, and the like, they are also filled with travel, history, the science of those days, the English classic poets and prose writers, and are not destitute of fiction and plays. They reveal the existence of a distinct literary attention in the community, which was in readiness for the native writers; or, if they failed to arise, these little libraries would breed them. What was true of the neighborhood of Boston was also the case in other local centres as far south as Philadelphia at least; the reading public, interested in contemporary books and also familiarized with the traditional higher forms of the literary art — essay, tale, and poem — had come.

The first appearance of an American spirit, indigenous and of the soil, would naturally be found in that folk-literature that comes with printer's ink instead of with the bardic harp, the broadside of ballad and news; but of this there was only a small product, chiefly remembered by the "Song of Braddock's Men," the ballad of "Nathan Hale," "Yankee Doodle," and the like; and no popular writer rose out of it. The first name distinctly literary was that of Philip Freneau, whose poems, though following the manner of the contemporary English school, had American color in their subjects; while he possessed literary feeling, he had no distinction except as a solitary figure, and he made no wide appeal to his countrymen. Charles Brockden Brown, the earliest American novelist, was of a much stronger native fiber. He had an original

impulse, springing from his times and his environment, and his novels were localized on the soil. In manner he, too, adopted the current English fashion, and yet not slavishly, but with a purpose to reform and advance it, and put it to new uses. He made a conscious attempt to substitute realism for romantic supernaturalism, and turned from the Gothic castle and the ghost to quasi-scientific phenomena, such as ventriloquism, somnambulism, and clairvoyance, for the magic of his mystery, and to the contemporary things of America, such as the Indian and the yellow-fever pest in New York, for the substance of his physical background. He remained, however, too closely attached to the pseudo-romantic in character, and was too much interested in the ideas of Godwin's English radicalism, to be able to break out a plain human story from the shell of life in the colonies, as Miss Edgeworth did in the case of Irish and Scott in the case of Scotch life. He was far from being a genius in fiction; but American traits, things, and contemporary interests are strongly marked in his curiously composite tales; the ferment of new literary life is in them. In the elder Richard Henry Dana, who held a similar position in the New England center, poetry and fiction were blended, but neither element disclosed American originality except by some modification of his English exemplars in respect to the setting of his works. The character, the passion, the situation are still of the pseudo-romantic English school, which was the tap-root of Byronism and in Dana sent out a wandering shoot over-sea. But Freneau, Brown, and Dana, though their works are long forgotten, illustrate the sort of literary creation that went on in the opening of the New World to the poetic and romantic imagination of its own sons. They

were pioneers of the literary art and profession, with habits English-bred, but working in the home field.

These were our beginnings in the life which a people leads through books, those works which it inherits from the fathers and those which it creates out of itself. This life lay almost exclusively in the religious, political, and historic fields; it was only with the generation born after the Revolution that literature was practised as a fine art in an independent and original way. But the colonial generations had done their work, and the time was ripe for complete life on the scale of Western civilization. They had planted religion, liberty, and letters, which are the three estates of a great nation; and literature had been their instrument in each phase of the triple task.

CHAPTER II

THE KNICKERBOCKER ERA

FATHER KNICKERBOCKER was the first literary creation of our country. The little old man in the old black coat and cocked hat, who strayed from his lodgings and was near being advertised for by the police of that day, and who left behind him the curious history that was to be sold for his debts, was destined by the spirit of humor to be the eldest child of our originality, and he proved his title-deeds and true birth so well that the estate of New York proudly received and owned him and gave him the island and river realm and took to itself and its belongings the name of its droll saint. He was a myth, like all our types; for American genius has never yet created a man or woman so much of nature's stamp as to live in our memories and affections like one of ourselves, as Uncle Toby or Hamlet or Pickwick does; but, like all true myths, he had a root in the soil. It was characteristically American, premonitory of a land of many races, that this Dutch grotesque, so pure in his racial strain as to incorporate all the old traditional blood in his figure, should have issued from a brain half Scotch and half English, the first-born of Irving's invention; but Dietrich Knickerbocker could hardly have seen himself with Dutch eyes, and so in this first instance it was the blending of the stocks that gave literary consciousness and set up the reactions that breed imagination and humor.

The city, nevertheless, was pure-blooded in these early days, at least by comparison with its later conglomera-

tions; and it was, in fact, the expression of local pride and race dignity in Dr. Mitchell's "Picture of New York" that gave occasion to the graceless half-breed, this young Irving, to amuse himself and the town with its author's vanity and heaviness. "The Knickerbocker History" was the sort of broad travesty that the victim calls coarse caricature, and it might not have survived so long and so acceptably if the victorious English race had not grown with the city and continued the local temper that most enjoyed the humor. Certainly the old Dutch town cannot be credited with producing Irving, except on the theory of opposites; it furnished the material, but the hand that wrought it was English by blood and breeding. It belonged to the situation that the observer should be of a different kind; the subject gained by his aloofness from it. If one to the manner born could never have seen the broad humor of it, neither could he have touched the Knickerbocker world with that luminous sentiment which by another smile of fortune made Rip Van Winkle immortal. Individuality has played an uncommonly large part in our literature, and its part is always greater than is usually allowed; and, after all, Irving created this past; he was the medium through whom it became visible; and it still lies there in the atmosphere of his genius not in the crudity of its own by-gone fact. He found the old Dutch life there in the city and up and down the waterways in his cheerful, tender, and warm youth; he laughed at it and smiled on it; and what it was to his imagination it came to be as reality almost historic to his countrymen.

It is all a colonial dream, like Longfellow's "Acadie," and the witchery of literature has changed it into an horizon of our past, where it broods forever over the reaches of the Hudson northward. Hawthorne's Puritan past is

not more evasive; but a broad difference is marked by the contrast of "The Scarlet Letter" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"; the absence of the moral element is felt in the latter; and a grosser habit of life, creature comfort, a harmless but unspiritual superstition, a human warmth, a social comradery, are prominent in Irving's lucubrations, and these are traits of the community ripened and sweetened in him. Irving must have been a charming boy, and in his young days he laid the bases of his life in good cheer, happy cordiality, the amiableness of a sensitive and pleasurable temperament, which he developed in the kindly and hospitable homes of the city. He was all his days a social creature, and loved society, masculine and feminine; and going from New York to a long European experience of social life he returned to be one of the finest types of a man so bred, fit to be one of the historic literary figures of a commercial and cosmopolitan city.

Irving, however, thorough American of his day though he was, bore but little relation to the life of the nation. He was indebted to his country for some impulses of his genius and much material which he reworked into books; but he gave more than he received. Our early literary poverty is illustrated by the gifts he brought. He was a pioneer of letters, but our literary pioneers instead of penetrating further into the virgin wilderness had to hark back to the old lands and come again with piratical treasures; and in this he was only the first of a long line of continental adventurers. Much of American literary experience, which comes to us in our few classics, was gained on foreign soil; and, in fact, it must be acknowledged that, like some young wines, American genius has been much improved by crossing the seas. Irving was the

first example. Commerce naturally leads to travel, and he went out as a man in trade to stay a few months. He remained seventeen years. It was not merely that he received there an aristocratic social training and opportunity peculiarly adapted to ripen his graces — and the graces of his style and nature are essentially social graces — but subjects were given to him and his sympathies drawn out and loosed by both his English and his Spanish residences.

Sentiment and romance were more to him than humor, and grew to be more with years; and in the old lands his mind found that to cling to and clamber over which otherwise might not have come to support his wandering and sympathetic mood. Genius he had, the nature and the faculty of an imaginative writer; what he needed was not power but opportunity; and at every new chance of life he answered to the time and place and succeeded. He alone of men not English-born has added fascination to English shrines, and given them that new light that the poet brings; and he has linked his name indissolubly for all English-reading people with the Alhambra and Granada. It was because of his American birth that he wrote of Columbus, and perhaps some subtle imaginative sympathy always underlies the attraction of Spain, which is so marked, for American writers; but it was not unfitting that in his volumes of travel sketches the romantic after-glow of Spain should bloom in our western sky. By such works, more than by his English sketches, which will always seem an undivided part of English literature, he gave to our early literature a romantic horizon, though found in the history and legend of a far country, which it had hitherto lacked; and it is a striking phenomenon to find our writers, on whom the skies shut down round the

shores of the New World, lifting up and opening out these prospects into the picturesque distance of earth's space and the romantic remoteness of history, as if our literary genius were gone on a voyage of discovery. It shows the expansion of the national mind, the cessation of the exiguous exile of the colonial days, the beginning of our reunion with the nations of the world, which still goes on; and in this reunion, necessary for our oneness with man, literature led the way in these romantic affections of our traveled man of letters, Irving, in whose wake the others followed.

The third point of contact that Irving's genius found with the larger life of his native land was in the realm of exploration. It was long now since the human tide had swept from the shores and inlets of the sea through the great forests and down the Appalachian slopes and broken in broad streams upon the open prairie; and the adventurers were already threading the thin trails of the desert and high mountain solitudes. Here was the new and unused material of national experience, and to this day its riches have gone to waste, so far as literature is concerned. Irving, however, on his late return home, was struck with admiration at the vast progress made into the Western wilderness, and he perceived its literary utility. A journey he made in the Southwest gave him the near view he always needed to stimulate his descriptive power and to wake his eye for incident, and in his "Tour of the Prairies" he wrote down our best literary impression of the actual scene. It is no more than a traveler's journal, but it remains unique and interesting. Unfortunately his temperament was not such as to respond with creative power over this new world. The theme did not pass beyond the realistic stage of treatment, just as in the case of Poe,

who also saw the subject in his "Julius Rodman," though Irving's handling far surpasses Poe's by virtue of his personality and the charm that radiates from it. Even less in "Astoria" and "Captain Bonneville" did Irving win the heart from this Western mystery. The matter remained crude, fine in its facts, but unimaginative, unwakened, unbreathed on by the spirit that giveth life. The Americanization of the wilderness was going on, but its literature was like that of the settlement of the coast in the earlier time, a mass of contemporary, rudely recorded experience and memory; the routes of the fur-traders still led only to and from the Astor counting-room; Irving observed and noted, and made a book or two of the discovery, but his imagination was not of the sort to draw out the romance of it, for it had no element of the past, and the past was his mother Muse.

It was the second writer who sprang up in the old city of New York, Cooper, who was to create in this broad field of national expansion, though in narrowly limited ways far from adequate to the vast sweep and variety of its immensely efficient life. Cooper subdued for literature the forest and the sea and brought them into the mind's domain, but it was rather as parts of nature than as the theater of men. The power of the scenery is most felt in his work and prevails over the human element. It is just perspective, nevertheless, and true to the emotion of the time and place.

He began very naturally. His first interest was in character, the personality that he immortalized as Harvey Birch, and in the events so near in memory to him and so close in locality, the Revolutionary scene as it was in Westchester; and out of these he made a historical tale that was the corner-stone of a great literary reputation.

But it was not long before he went deeper into the sources of his own experience for theme and feeling, and his most characteristic work was a part of himself, of that self which had shared most widely in the novel and broad experience of American life. He had grown up under the shadow of the wild forest and in the sunlight of the lake and clearing, in close contact with nature all his boyish days; familiarity with the forest gave him at a later time of youth the open secret of the sea, so much the same are the ground tones of nature; and ceasing to be midshipman and lieutenant, he had, so to speak, made the rounds of the great elements in whose primitive simplicities he set his story. There was something of the artist in him, but nothing of the poet, and he felt the impressiveness of nature, its oppositions to society and law and man, as our common humanity feels them, not in Wordsworthian aloofness and spiritual interpretation, but as a real presence, an actuality, a thing of fact. His popular vogue in France was prepared for him by a pre-established harmony between the eloquent French dream of the life of nature and his narrative where nature still brooded as in a lake, so near was he to her presence; but what was to the foreigner a new Arcadia only, an illusion of the heart, was to him a living world.

Being a novelist, he concentrated this vague emotion of the free majesty of nature in a character of fiction, Leatherstocking, one of the great, original types of romanticism in the past century. Yet Leatherstocking, like Knickerbocker, is pure myth, with a root in the soil, too, an incarnation of the forest-border, a blend of nature and man in a human form, thoroughly vitalized, impressive, emotional, an ideal figure. It is characteristic of our greater writers, even our humorists, to be nearer to

the American idea than to anything concretely American. The infusion of grandeur — the word is not inappropriate — in Cooper's work is what gives it distinction, and most in its most imaginative portions. It is true that he invented the sea-novel, as was not unnatural, in view of his experience of our maritime life and of the great place of that life in our national activity and consciousness; and he used colonial, revolutionary, and border history out of our stores to weave incident, plot, and scene; but it is not these things that make him national, but the American breath that fills his works; and where this is least the scene grows mean, petty, awkward, inept, feeble; and where it is greatest there the life is found — in "The Pathfinder," "The Deerslayer," "The Prairie." He was abroad, like Irving, for many years, and gained thereby — perhaps through contrast and detachment merely — a truer conception and deeper admiration of democracy, its principles, aims, and energies; but he was national where Irving was international, and if Irving in his literary relation to his country, is rather thought of as an influence upon it, Cooper was its effluence, the American spirit in forest, sea, and man taking on form, feature, and emotion first in his world, sentimentalized, idealized, pictorial though it was. The best that literature achieves is a new dream; this was the first dream of American life, broad and various, in its great new solitudes of sea and land.

Irving and Cooper were the two writers of the first rank in our letters. Strangely contrasted in their careers as well as in character, and curiously overlapping in their experience and writings, neither of them was a true product of New York, or bound to it, except in ephemeral ways. The one beloved, the other hated, their reputa-

tions were alike national. American literature, which was in no sense provincial, began with them. A third great name, which is as large in tradition, at least, is linked with theirs in the city's literary fame. Bryant was a New-Englander by birth, and remained one in nature all his life, but his name lingers where he had his career, in the metropolis. It belongs to a city in which of all the cities of the earth nativity is the least seal of citizenship to appropriate justly the works of its foster-children; and Bryant illustrates, as a New-Yorker, its assimilation of the sons of all the nation. In the Niagara of life that forever pours into its vast human basin, there has been a constant current from New England, important in the city's life and control. What Beecher was in religion, Bryant was in poetry — an infusion of highly liberalized moral power. Irving said there was nothing Puritanical in himself, nor had he any sympathy with Puritanism; and Cooper hated the New England type, though he was pietistic to an uncommon degree. Between them they represented the temper of the New York community on both its worldly and evangelical side. Bryant, however, offers a sharp contrast to them, for he had precisely that depth of moral power that was his heritage from Puritanism, and marked in the next generation the literature of New England, setting it off from the literature of New York. Depth, penetration, intensity, all that religious fervor fosters and spirituality develops, was what Irving and Cooper could lay no claim to. In Bryant something of this, in an early, primitive, and simple form of liberalism, came into the city, though it was not naturalized there. So lonely is it, indeed, that it is almost impossible for the mind to identify Bryant the poet with Bryant the editor. He himself kept the two lives distinct, and his

distance and coldness marked the aloofness of the poet in him from the world about him.

It is hard in any case to localize Bryant not merely in the city, but in America, because he is so elemental in his natural piety. That something Druidical which there is in his aspect sets him apart; he was in his verse a seer, or what we fancy a seer to be, a priest of the holy affections of the heart in communion with nature's God, one whose point of view and attitude suggest the early ministrations of adoring Magians, the intuitions of Indian sages, or the meditations of Greek philosophers. A sensitive mind can hardly rid itself of this old-world, or early-world, impression in respect to Bryant. The hills and skies of Berkshire had roofed a temple for him, and the forest aisled it, and wherever he moved he was within the divine precincts. Eternity was always in the same room with him. It was this sense of grandeur in nature and man, the perpetual presence of a cosmic relation, that dignified his verse and made its large impression; even his little blue gentian has the atmosphere of the whole sky. He was a master of true style, as refined in its plainness as was Irving's in its grace. If he was not national in a comprehensive sense, he was national in the sense that something that went to the making of the nation went to the making of him; the New England stock which had spread into the West and veined the continent with its spirit, as ore veins the rock, was of the same stuff as himself, and the race manifestation of its fundamental religious feeling in his pure and uncovenanted poetry was the same as in Channing's universality. Present taste may forget his work for a time, but its old American spirit has the lasting power of a horizon peak; from those uplands we came, and some of the songs heard there the na-

tion will carry in its heart. He was the last of the early triad of our greater writers, and his presence is still a memory in the city streets; but the city that was greater for his presence, as for Irving and Cooper, who had passed away before him, is also greater for their memory.

Between the major and the lesser gods of the city there is a great gulf fixed. Irving, Cooper, and Bryant were on the American scale — they were national figures. There were almost none who could be described as second to them. Every metropolis, however, breeds its own race of local writers, like mites in a cheese, numerous and active, the literary coteries of their moment. To name one of them, there was Willis; he was gigantic in his contemporaneousness. He is shrunk now, as forgotten as a fashion-plate, though once the cynosure of the literary town. He was the man that Irving, by his richer nature, escaped being, the talented, clever, frivolous, sentimental, graceful artifice of a man, the town-gentleman of literature; he was the male counterpart of Fanny Fern and Grace Greenwood; he outlasted his vogue, like an old beau, and was the superannuated literary journalist. Yet in no other city was he so much at home as here, and in the memoirs of the town he would fill a picturesque and rightful place. A court would have embalmed him, but in a democracy his oblivion is sealed.

One or two other early names had a sad fortune in other ways. Drake and Halleck stand for our boyish precocity; death nipped the one, trade sterilized the other; there is a mortuary suggestion in the memory of both. Halleck long survived, a fine outside of a man, with the ghost of a dead poet stalking about in him, a curious experience to those who met him, with his old-fashioned courtesy and the wonder of his unliterary survival. Of

the elder generation these are the names that bring back the old times, Willis, Drake, and Halleck; and they all suggest the community in a more neighborly way than the national writers.

There was a culture in the old city which bred them, and a taste for letters such as grows up where there are educated men of the professions and a college to breed them. The slight influence of Columbia, however, and the main fact that it developed professional and technical schools instead of academic power, point to the controlling factor in the city's life, its preoccupation with practical and material interests. Literature was bound in such a modern community to be bottomed on commerce; whatever else it might be, it was first an article of trade to be used as news, circulated in magazines, sold in books. It has become, at present, largely an incident of advertising. New York was a great distributing center, and editors, publishers, and writers multiplied exceedingly. The result was as inevitable here as in London or Paris, but the absence of a literary past and of a society of high-bred variety made a vast difference in the tone and in the product. Parnassus became a receding sentimental memory, fit for a child's wonder-book like Hawthorne's; but Bohemia was thronged, and its denizens grew like mushrooms in a cellar. There was, too, from the beginning, something bibulous and carnivorous in the current literary life; the salon did not flourish, but there was always a Bread-and-Cheese Club; and, indeed, from the days of Irving's youthful suppers, the literary legend of the city, not excluding its greater names, might be interestingly and continuously told by a series of memoirs of its convivial haunts. The men who frequented them and kept each other in countenance were as mortal, for the most

part, as Pfaff's, once the Mermaid Tavern of the town-wits. Such resorts, too, are hot-houses for the development of clever lads; and literature suffered by the over-production of small minds. When in the history of letters gregariousness begins, one may look out for mediocrity. Great writers have found themselves in exile, in prison, in solitudes of all sorts; and great books are especially written in the country. Literature, too, is naturally exogamous; it marries with the remote, the foreign, the strange, and requires to be fertilized from without; but Bohemia, shut in its own petty frivolities, breeds the race of those manikins of Manhattan whose fame Holmes gibed at as having reached Harlem. Open Griswold and find their works; open Poe's "Literati" and find their epitaphs; of such is the kingdom of the Bohemians the world over. Such a race is incidental to a metropolitan literature; nor were they altogether inferior men; many of them led useful lives and won local eminence; some even achieved the honors of diplomacy. They contributed much to their own gaiety and enlivened life with mutual admiration and contempt. Poe stirred up the swarm considerably. But no satire embalmed them in amber, and they are forgotten even by their own successors.

The city grew to be, through these middle years of the century, an ever-increasing mart of literary trade. The people, with their schools and Sunday-schools and habits of home-reading, were to be supplied with information and entertainment, and New York, like Philadelphia, became a great manufactory of books. The law of demand and supply, however, has a limited scope in literature; it can develop quantity but not quality. Text-books, encyclopedias, popular knowledge, travel, and story all spawned in great numbers, but the literature of

creation and culture continued to be sparse. It might have been thought that the literature of amusement, at least, would have flourished, and songs and plays have abounded; in fact, they did not exist except in the mediocre state. This infertility of the metropolis in the lasting forms of literature brings home to us the almost incredible famine of the time more sharply than even the tales that are told of the lack of expectation of any appreciation felt by the first great writers.

Irving's discovery that he could live by literature was a surprise to him; he had begun with an experiment rather than an ambition, and, having thus found his humor, he went on to make trial of sentiment, pathos, and romance. Cooper had no confidence — scarcely a hope — that an American novel would be accepted by his own countrymen. They had become so used to their lack of native productions as to mistake it for a permanent state. It was almost an accident that Cooper ever finished "The Spy," and he did it in the scorn of circumstance.

The success of the greater writers was immediate and great; the city gave them dinners and has reared their statues, and was proud of them at the time in a truly civic way; but a cold obstruction of genius has set in ever since. The lesser writers approached them only on their feeblest side. Perhaps the bulk of emotional writing in every kind was of the sentimental sort. The men produced a good deal of it, but the women reveled and languished in it. "Ben Bolt," the popular concert-hall tune of its day, was a fair example of its masculine form; and such writers as Mrs. Osgood and the Cary sisters illustrate its feminine modes. Sentimentality is apt to seem very foolish to the next generation in its words;

but in character it survives with a more realistic impression; and in Poe, in his relations to these literary women, one sees the contemporary type. He was mated with Willis as the dark with the sunny, and as misery with mirth. He enchanted the poetesses and was enchanted, finding in each one a new lost Lenore. All his female figures, in their slightly varied monotone, Annabel and Annie, are in the realm of this sentimentality gone maudlin in him as it had gone silly in others. It was most wholesome when it stayed nearest to nature and domestic life; but there, too, it was feeble and lachrymose. The breath of the civil war put an end to it for the time; but even that great passion left few traces of itself in our letters. The writings of Dickens favored sentimentality, and much more the poems of Mrs. Browning and the early verse of Tennyson. We had our "little Dickenses," but it is significant of the temperament of our literature that we had not even a "little" Thackeray. Just above this level there was here and there a cultivated author, reminiscent of sentiment in its purer forms — of Lamb and Irving, for example — of whose small number Curtis stands eminent for cheerfulness, intrinsic winningness, and unfailing grace. He was the last of the line that began with Irving, through which the literary history of the city can be traced as if in lineal descent. In him sentiment was what it should always be — a touch, not the element itself.

It is quite in the order of things that in a literature so purely romantic as our own has been in the greater writers, sentimentality should characterize those of lesser rank, for it naturally attends romanticism as an inferior satellite. It has all vanished now, and left Lenore and Annie and Annabel its lone survivors. We are a ro-

mantic and sentimental nation, as is well known, and we are also a nation of efficiency. The literary energies of the nation, apart from its genius, have been immense in reality; they have gone almost wholly into popular education in its varied forms, and in no city upon such a scale as in New York. The magazines and the great dailies exhibit this activity in the most striking ways, both for variety and distinction; and on the side of literature, in the usual sense, from the days of the old "Mirror," "Knickerbocker," and "Democratic" the growth has been steady, and has carried periodical writing to its height of popular efficiency both for compass and power. The multitude of writers in the service have been substantially occupied with the production of news in the broadest sense. The poem and the essay have been rather things conceded than demanded, and make but a small part in the whole; but the news of the artistic, literary, and scientific worlds — fact, event, personality, theory, and performance — all this has been provided in great bulk. The writers strive to engage attention, to interest; and the matter of prime interest in such a city is the news of the various world. Even in the imaginative field something of the same sort is to be observed in the usual themes and motives. The detective story, for example, Japanese or other foreign backgrounds, the novel of adventure, and travel and animal sketches and the like, have an element of news; and the entire popularization of knowledge belongs in the same region of interest. Thought, reflection, meditation, except on political and social subjects, does not flourish; that brooding on life and experience, out of which the greatest literature emerges, has not been found, whatever the reason may be, and, in fact, it is rather a matter of original endow-

ment than of the environment. The literary craft, however, if it lacked genius, has been characterized by facile and versatile talent, and its product has been very great in mass and of vast utility. In no other city is the power of the printed word more impressive. The true literature of the city is, in reality, and has long been, its great dailies; they are for the later time what the sermons of the old clergy were in New England — the mental sphere of the community — and in them are to be found all the elements of literature except the qualities that secure permanence.

CHAPTER III

THE LITERARY AGE OF BOSTON

HARVARD COLLEGE was the fountain-head of New England literature. Boston would have been an interesting place without its fructifying neighbor, such was its civic stock; with its double lobe of Puritan and Pilgrim, it would have been the brain of the State, a mart of trade, and a nest of rebels, but hardly, perhaps, one of the little, historic Meccas that perpetually challenge the real importance of metropolitan vastness; and in the hearts of its people, at least, with Florence and Edinburgh, not to be profane with diviner names, Boston brings up the rear of small but famous towns. Whatever of truth there is in this well-known boast comes from the College. It happened in the old days, long before Harvard became the high altar of learning it now is, the feeding flame of manifold lofty causes, sacrosanct with honorable lives and the votive wealth of dying generations set apart for the disinterested uses of men; the present University, with its millions of money devoted to the unborn millions of our people, is a latter-day miracle with its own future all before it; but in the time that was, in the two centuries of humbleness, when the old College was still only the campfire kindled by the Muses in the wilderness, there lies an accomplished past, a work ended and done, whose memory most survives in the literary fame of Boston.

The collegiate spark, which is now parceled out among museums and laboratories, and feeds an immense power-

house of technical arts, applied sciences, and lucrative professions, was then rather a thing of men's bosoms, of the instincts of imagination, the guesses of philosophy, the intuitions of religion; if the University, through the inculcation of scientific knowledge and its varied training for useful pursuits, has now become more a great prop of the material state, the College discharged well its elder function as a restorer of the human spirit through the seeking of truth; and under its plain academic rule, before the old order changed, giving place to new, Harvard came into vital touch with the thoughts of men, and bore once that little, unnoticed flower of the soul whose seeds at last are blown throughout the world. It began, perhaps, in the time of Channing, and the first true contact may have been in that pure, mild spirit; then the young Emerson left the pulpit, the young Phillips mounted the platform; outside — for the academic race is never more than a small part of the various and abounding state — Garrison struck the hour. It was a crude, strange, composite time. The phalanx was converging on Brook Farm; dervishes of all kinds were camping round the Saadi tent at Concord; Hawthorne, Longfellow, and Lowell kept their lettered seclusion undisturbed; the Lyceum multiplied like a torch from village to village; and the new woman of the period had grown up in Margaret Fuller, and, in fact, in Sophia Peabody and Maria White she was already wedded to Hawthorne and Lowell. It was the literary age of Boston.

The traits of the period are still hard to grasp. The immense crudity of that age taxes our credulity, and at times perplexes us by arousing the sense of humor instead of exciting the organ of reverence. "Thou shalt read Hafiz," says Emerson, as he lays down the gospels; and

the modern reader of Hafiz stands aghast! The amazing contradictions — young parsons leaders of the mob; the naïve surprises — Lowell as a temperance lecturer at the picnic where Maria White as queen was crowned with a coronal of pond-lilies; the suggestions, now of a deodorized Bohemia at Fresh Pond, or the Arcadia of married lovers and confirmed hermits at Walden, now of the *milieu* of the "Vicar of Wakefield," and again of some *fête champêtre* in Sterne — all puzzle the ingenuous and unacclimated mind. The provinciality of the life is as fresh and startling, and as humanly interesting, as in the work of great novelists. The wonderful rurality of Lowell's youth, scarcely guessed even by his biographers, is one extreme; the other is, let us say, Allston, returned from abroad. He had known Coleridge. What a figure he wore in Cambridgeport! Had Jane Austen lived her girlhood at Salem, or Peacock passed a summer at Concord, what delightful mischief might have been ours! What an enrichment of our literature in eccentric and ever-laughable realism! But the society of which Allston was an ornament, the study of Ticknor, the dining-room of Judge Prescott, the counting-room of Francis and Thorndike, the court-room of Mason and Shaw, would have required a yet more masterly hand. We get glimpses of it in memoirs and anecdotes, but the scene yet waits its author, and is most like to pass away without a poet. Yet this conservative, commercial, respectable society of the traveled and home-keeping provincials is the background on which must be relieved the radicalism of Emerson and Phillips, the elegance of Longfellow, the self-sufficiency of Hawthorne, the manhood-worth of Whittier, the Brahmin pride of Holmes, the cleverness of Lowell. If the background be so impossible to sketch, still more is

the sway and jostle of the contemporary crowd. Only a few impressions are firm enough to be put down.

Emerson stands the foremost figure. In him the spirituality of New England culminated and was so blended with practical character as to make him a very high type of his race. Spirituality was of the essence of New England from its birth, and underlies its historic democracy as the things of eternity underlie the things of time. In the earlier age, however, the soul-life was cramped in archaisms of thought and breeding and all expression was in stiffened forms. This Puritan past impresses our minds now very much as Byzantine art affects our eyes — as a thing in bonds. It is real, though remote; it shrouds mysteries of religious feeling dark to us; but, above all else, it seems a spirit imprisoned. Blake might so have pictured it more intelligibly with his rude strength; a thing gaunt, tragic, powerful, one of the Titan forms of human suffering. The enlargement, the enfranchisement, the new sphere of light, of labor and prayer had come before Emerson; he was born into a free world. The spread of Unitarianism in New England was a growth in the order of nature; it was not revolutionary; it was normal development; and in this mental expansion and moral softening, in the amelioration of the American spirit in all ways, which Unitarianism denoted in the community, Harvard College was the radiating influence. By his collegiate, clerical fathers, Emerson was in the first line of those who were to share the new thought and advance the new practice. The work of Channing and his friends is not to be forgotten, but in the lapse of time it has lost distinction, and blurs into half-remembered things like ancestral strains; the climax of the liberal movement was in Emerson's genius, and there shines,

concentrated, a white light of the spirit for a long age. He was a pure radical; we are apt to forget how radical he was. Harvard recoiled, astounded and indignant at the son she had borne; yet it was from within her halls — and it is ever to be remembered for Harvard honor — that both the academic and the religious proclamation went forth from his lips, in the Phi Beta Kappa oration and the Divinity School Address; and, however the elders might disown and protest, the words fell on good ground in the hearts of youth and multiplied sixty and a hundred fold. It is not without reason that the Hall of Philosophy there should bear his name, now that all old controversies have fallen asleep, for both by his inheritance from the past and his influence upon the American world Harvard was the corner-stone of his pure and high fame.

But, though Harvard and the things of Harvard were the essential environment of Emerson, and he was the child of the old College in a much larger sense than is usually meant by that phrase, there was something of much greater import in his genius, deeper, fast-rooted in what lies below education, intellect, and books, something communal that made him even more the son of the soil, one of the people. He had that quality of race which marks the aristocrat in the real sense of that word, whose abuse has almost exiled it from the speech of truth. What characterized the stock shone forth in him highly perfected and efficient, in the form of character, on both its heavenward and its earthward sides, and he possessed, besides, that accomplishment of language which allowed him to give the racial element in the form of literature. He would have been called, as the world goes, a poor man, but in his own village he was well-off; he lived, on his

thousand or more dollars a year, the life of a refined gentleman, and reared his family, like others of his own station, on this sum in an atmosphere of true cultivation; he was economical, frugal even, and independent; but what distinguished him, and made him a true leader in that homogeneous community, was that he kept the old perspective of the relative worth of spiritual and temporal things, inherited from Puritan days in the habits of the mind, and held to the lasting transcendency of the one and the evanescence of the other, without any sense of effort or consciousness of peculiarity, just as his neighbors also did, but he did it in a singularly high and exemplary way.

In a world so conceived his freedom was remarkable, his disengagement, his independence of thought and action both, his responsibility only to himself, his indifference to others' views. Scarce any man was so free as he. His self-possession in this attitude was almost spectacular to others. It struck them as "sublime insolence," and any number of such phrases of amazement at a man who was simply true to himself, and took no more thought of the crowd or of the individual than he did of the morrow. Truth had never a better seeker; he took only what was necessary for the journey, and what he found with his eyes he declared with his lips. Things that were not in the line of his search did not interest him; they might be matters as grave and sacred, as endeared and intimate, as the Holy Communion, but he passed on; of course he shocked many a tender conscience and many a hardy dogmatist, but he was ignorant of it essentially, being clad in a panoply of innocence that was almost simplicity of mind. The same spirit that he showed in religious thought he exhibited also in politics, and not temporary

politics only, but that lasting Americanism which he molded into so many memorable phrases of freedom, equality, and fraternity.

His time of illumination was in early manhood, and the little work called "Nature" was its gospel; later, as he traveled farther from the light, he declined on more mundane matters of morals and manners, on conduct, on the question of human behavior in one or another way, and left the old, speculative table-lands of his youth, and with him life after thirty-five was a declining day. Yet always his method was by intuition; his courage responded to the challenge of the unknown, to the tangle-growth of poetry and philosophy, to the dragon-jaws of paradox; and if at times, in our more sophisticated sight, Emerson in his mental adventures seems to suffer from the irrepressible joke that lurks in life, almost like some Parson Adams of the mind, he is only thereby brought the nearer to our home-breed, and graced the more with that nameless quality which, in other ways, also shines from his figure, and endears the Don Quixote of every idealistic race. Such he was — the idealism of New England in its human saintship; or, if not quite that, as near it as Heaven ever makes the living Don Quixotes of real life.

These analogies may seem derogatory, but they are not really so; they are, in their sphere, patents of true nobility, another sort of crowning phrase to tell how that in his mortal life he was not untouched by the pathetic grotesqueness which clings to the idealist everywhere in this tough world, while in his soul he was also the white flower of Puritanism — *flos regum,* the last of his race. Puritanism, the old search for God in New England, ended in him; and he became its medium at its culmi-

nating moment of vision and freedom, because he was a racial man, and held, condensed, purified, and heightened in his own heart, the developed genius of the small, free, resolute, righteous, God-fearing people, the child of whose brief centuries he was; they found no other world-voice. Emerson was their gift at the great altar of man.

If Emerson was the concentration and embodiment of the inward Puritan life, the strength and beauty of the naked soul that had cast the garment of the past and emerged at last in lucid regions, Longfellow — who, perhaps from some prepossession in favor of poets, I cannot but regard as second in the New England group — was representative of the outward charm of intellectual culture as it came to fullness in the community; and though it may seem a mere subtlety to say so, intellectual culture is, in truth, an outward thing. So, too, as Harvard, by virtue of being the fount of the old ministry, the place of the enlightenment and enlargement when the kinder hour came, and the nursery of the youth who heard and followed the new voice, had bred, nourished, and supported Emerson, the old College also performed a similar service for Longfellow, opening the way for him, yielding him a place in the midst of her power, and surrounding him from youth to age with such a happy environment of friends and things that he might well think of his lot as the special favor of Heaven.

He was Maine-born, and reared at the neighboring college of Bowdoin, to whose academic influences he was greatly indebted; but Harvard, in adopting him, made him her own, and gave him a career among her own, and he and the humane studies he stood for became an integral and lasting part of the ideal of Harvard culture, which has suffered no essential change even now, though

its relative sphere at Harvard is much narrowed, partaking the spiritual retrogression, the decline in refinement, of the nation at large. It is true that this ideal of Harvard culture had already begun to form before Longfellow's time. Just as Channing had prepared the way for Emerson in the things of the pure spirit, George Ticknor was the precursor of Longfellow, not only as a scholar in whom the refining power of scholarship was eminent, but as a scholar in the same fields of literature. Yet the crest of the wave, which was the first movement of Old-World culture across the Atlantic, was certainly Longfellow's "Dante," of which his earlier collections and translations were forerunners, and to which Lowell's work, when he came to succeed him, was hardly more than an appendix. That first appropriation of foreign thought in New England took place so obscurely, and had so few distinctive results in our own literature, that its history and import are much forgotten. It deserves a little chapter to itself when our literature comes to be written in any other than a biographical form.

The impact of Carlyle and a few other single figures, such as Goethe, Lessing, Fourier, is sometimes noted, and to such writers as Ripley and Margaret Fuller, Hedge and Hilliard, much is due. What Longfellow accomplished did not lie so much in this field of individual authors and specific thought on particular matters then of current interest; he brought over, as it were, whole literatures, putting us in touch as a nation with the tongues of the north and south of Europe alike, with all the shores of old romance, with the spirit that abides beautiful in the chronicles of wasted time; he annexed by a stroke of the pen this literary past of Europe to our New World; at least to him, as unquestionably the

first modern scholar of his time, a scholar of the spirit as well as of the text, go the praise and the grateful remembrance of all who have since followed, though far off. in his footsteps. So Emerson, too, first felt the fructifying power of Oriental thought in his own sphere of philosophy and the poetry of general causes, and interpreted it somewhat, however defective the interpretation; and through these two men largely such expansion as contrasts with fresh and novel literatures can give came to our education. It is in this part of his work that Harvard, holding up Longfellow's hands, most helped the cause of civilization so far as that is involved in the permanence of literature, and received for her reward that ideal of Harvard culture, already referred to, which is embedded in her traditions.

As a scholar Longfellow was cosmopolitan, but in that portion of his life which was the fruit of his poetic gift he was distinctively American. If the mildness of his nature be considered, the fervor of Longfellow's patriotism was a very marked quality; his habitual artistic control conceals its real force, but does not hide its clear depth; from the early days, when he was all for Americanism in literature, through his manhood friendship with Sumner, and his anti-slavery poems, to the darker days of the sinking of the Cumberland and the prayer for the ship of state, he was one with his country's aspiration, struggle, and trial, one in heart with her life; but he showed this patriotic prepossession of his whole nature, if less touchingly, still more significantly, by his choice of American themes for what were in no sense occasional poems, but the greater works in which he built most consciously and patiently for her fame in poetry — in "Hiawatha," "Evangeline," "Miles Standish," and the

like. It is the fashion to decry these poems now, yet the fact cannot be gainsaid that each of these remains the only successful poem of its kind — one of Indian life, one of the colonial pastoral, one of the Puritan idyl — while the trials made by others have been numerous; and in each of these, but especially in the first two, there is in quality a marvelous purity of tone which, for those who are sensitive to it, is one of the rarest of poetic pleasures. It is also the fashion to decry the shorter poems by which Longfellow entered into the homes of the people, but if Heaven ever grants the prayer that a poet may write the songs of a people, it is surely in such poems as these that the divine gift reveals its presence. They are in the mouths of children and on the lips of boys, and that is well; but they are also strength and consolation to older hearts; they are read in quiet hours, they are murmured in darkened rooms, they blend with the sacred experiences of many lives. Say what one will, the "Psalm of Life" is a trumpet-call, and a music breathes from "Resignation," in which the clod on the coffin ceases to be heard, and dies out of the ear at last with peace. In the grosser spirit of life that now everywhere prevails, even among the best, and is not confined to any one sphere of politics, art, or letters, nor to any one country or capital, it is not surprising that the fame of Longfellow should be obscured; but his silent presence must still be deeply and widely felt in those simpler and million homes that make up the popular life which, as the whole history of poetry shows, can never be corrupted. Longfellow had this remarkable and double blessing: he was the product of the old Puritan stock at its culminating moment of refinement, its most cultivated gentleman, and he also enters most easily at lowly doors.

Hawthorne is the third great New England name, and many would place him higher than either Emerson or Longfellow, in valuing his pure genius; but from the point of view here taken, which is mainly one of historical significance and the communal life, he falls necessarily into an inferior position. He, too, was the child of the old Puritanism, and, like the others, was emancipated from its bonds from boyhood; but something stayed in his blood which in the others had suffered a happy change. The genius of Emerson and Longfellow worked in the line of growth, so that they mark in their different spheres the attainment of a new goal; the genius of Hawthorne involved rather a reversion to the Puritan past, and, not only that, but to what was grim, harsh, and terrible in its spirit; his genius worked in a reactionary way upon the theme of his brooding, and he threw open the doors of the past rather than the gates of the future. He found what people find in tombs — dead sins and moldered garments of the soul. Puritanism was to him a dreadful memory, which so fastened on his mind as to obtain new life, like an evil obsession there, as if, in truth, it were still contemporary in men's bosoms too, and he could read them by its dark light.

This recrudescence of Puritanism, in an imaginative form, in Hawthorne, was the cardinal thing about him in relation to the community; by virtue of it he made Tuscany another Salem, and gave the treasures of Catholic art to feed the fires of the Puritan Moloch. His village world of observation was his own, as he saw it in daily life and faithfully recorded it; but his world of imagination was the old Puritan country-side, seen in spectral, uncanny, Dantesque ways, a hateful past full of pictures turning to life under his hand, to your life and my life,

to the life of man as it is in the eternal present. He could not shake it off; his genius cast shadow; he was a profound pessimist — sin to him was life. Out of all this came a single new creation, which with Knickerbocker and Leatherstocking makes the third original American type, Donatello; like them, he has no basis in vital life; he is a blend of elemental things, a dream of the mind, an emanation half of the artistic senses of a poetic temperament in love with life, half of the remorseful thought of a heart that had "kept watch o'er man's mortality"; but, visionary as he is, Donatello is a true imaginative type, no more to be forgotten than the other purely artistic figures of literature, like Sir Galahad, like the Red Cross Knight, of whose race he is. It seems a miracle of time that drew out of the dark bosom of Puritanism this figure of the early world, fair with Greek beauty, and made its plastic loveliness the flower in art of the Puritan conscience.

It is art that finally sets Hawthorne aloof from the others in a place of his own. It might almost be said that for him heredity had become environment, so much did the past oversway the present in his moral temperament, his outlook on life, and his probings of its mysteries; his genius, in its most concentrated and intense work, was deeply engaged in this inherited subject-matter, this reluctant, repellent, stubborn Puritan stuff, the dark, hard ore; but the object of his attention being thus given, and the manner of its interpretation being born in him, also, he remained for the rest more the pure literary artist than his contemporaries in New England; the instinct of romantic art for its own mere sake was in him. In the expanding life of New England this thing, too, had happened with other things: an artist had been born

there. He was strangely indifferent to everything in the community, he was solitary and a man apart; but he was faithful to his own one talent, the power to take an original view of the world, a romantic view, and turn it to pictures in the loom of literature. The world remained the old Puritan world, all the world he knew; but in his eyes it became a pictorial thing, while retaining, necessarily, its moral substance and tragic suggestiveness, and it took on artistic form under his hand. His love for his art and the things in life that would feed it was absorbing; he idled at all times when not employed with it; he found his happiness in exercising it; it was his art that was necessary to him, not its message; he lived by imagination. In him, consequently, the communal life is seen in the last of its threefold manifestations in the literature of the old Puritan race; in Emerson it shows forth in the pure soul, in Longfellow it blossomed in the heart, and in Hawthorne it left, as on darkness, its imaginative dream.

In these three men the genius of the people, working out in the place and among the things of its New England nativity, reached its height, so far as concerns that partial expression which literature can give to a people's life. They were surrounded by manifold other activities of the commercial spirit, in politics, trade, philanthropy, taking place in a busy state; they were supported, however, by an educated class in large numbers of similar breeding, sympathetic in taste and interest, and openly appreciative of their labors; and there were, also, perhaps a score of other writers about them among whom three still stand out with great prominence — Holmes, Whittier, and Lowell — of whom two, as in the other group, were closely bound to Harvard College.

Holmes was, in fact, what he liked to be thought — a town wit. His attachment to the English of the eighteenth century was the result of a native sympathy. He was a citified man, such as the old Londoners were. He was not so much a New-Englander as he was a Bostonian, and not so much a Bostonian as he was a "Brahmin," to use his own name for the thing, with just that diminishing inclusiveness that Henry James expressed in saying of Thoreau that he was "more than provincial; he was parochial." Holmes was, in certain ways, the city parallel to that. It is seen in his consciousness of his audience, which is ever present, in the dinner-talk flavor of his prose, in the local "asides" of his many occasional poems; he has not the art to forget himself. Such a writer is seldom understood except by the generation with which he is in social touch; magnetism leaves him; he amuses his own time with a brilliant mental vivacity, but there it ends.

Whittier was the opposite of Holmes; he was the poet of the plain people, born among them and never parting company by virtue of education or that sort of growth which involves a change in social surroundings. His Quaker blood distinguished him from the others, who were all Unitarians; but the distinction is illusory, for his Quakerism did for him precisely what Unitarianism did for them in giving mildness and breadth to his religious spirit. It is by his piety that he most appeals now to the general heart; by his reminiscences of the outward form of New England country life and its domestic types, as in "Snowbound," he came near to the homes of the community as a whole, while as the antislavery poet he held a specific and historic place in the life of the times; the three strains of interest, especially when felt through the

medium of his simple goodness, preserve his fame; moreover, as a people's poet, whose humble manhood remained unspoiled, he is assured of long memory. As a type of character he was as appropriate for the country as Holmes was for the city; though both are high types, and though it seems paradoxical, Whittier had vastly the greater range. Both were deeply rooted in the soil, and had native history in their blood; both, too, were provincial in a way that their three great contemporaries were not.

In the case of Lowell there is still something enigmatic. He was younger than the others; he was more complex in nature, and changed more from youth to age and even late in life. He alone owed much of his public recognition to the accident of office. He cannot take his own place in literature until, like Irving, he is forgotten as an ambassador. He came of Unitarian ancestry, like Emerson; he was bred on the same studies as Longfellow, whom he succeeded as a scholar; he developed criticism, but did not relinquish poetry; he did not work hard at either prose or verse. The "Biglow Papers" is his most original work, racy of the soil and the times, in its homelier sphere as native a product of the practical as "Donatello" is of the spiritual temper of that breed of men. The "Commemoration Ode" is his loftiest achievement. He was the poet of the civil war in a sense not so true of any of the four older poets. He lived in a Harvard atmosphere all his life, but no man was less academic. His prose came mainly from his brain, and is of a transitory nature, and steadily grows less interesting. These seem the main facts about him. He now seems essentially a man of letters, of high endowments, having the accomplishment of verse with his many other rich and varied gifts, and

no more than that. It would appear that the inspiration that gave us Emerson, Longfellow, and Hawthorne had already begun to fail, and beat with a lowered pulse in the youngest and last of the group.

It becomes plain on looking back that the literary age of Boston was before the civil war. With the exception of Lowell — and this helps to explain his position — the character of these men was formed and their work completely determined before 1860, and most of it was done. It was all the aftermath of Puritanism in literature. The debt it owed to Unitarianism is clear; its direct and indirect obligation to Harvard College, though but partially set forth, is obviously great, and just as clearly was due to the old humanities as there taught. In forty years we have drifted further perhaps than any of us have thought from the conditions and influences that gave our country so large a part of its literary distinction.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUTH

THE South has from the beginning contained, in the mass, a peculiar people. The special traits of its literary history are not wholly explained by the statement, so often made, that there colonial conditions of life continued until the social dissolution brought about by the civil war, and that colonial conditions, as has been seen, did not in the North result in original literature. Much that was favorable to literary development existed in the South from the formation of the Union onward. The aspects of natural scenery there, picturesque, luxuriant, novel, with features of moorland and mountain, of lowland and upland, of river and coast, of rice and cotton culture, of swamp, bayou, and sand, of a bird and flower world of marvelous brilliancy and music, of an atmosphere and climate clothing the night and day and the seasons of the stars in new garments of sensibility and suggestion — all this was like a new theme and school to the poet who should chance to be born there. The human history of the States, too, with its racial features of mingled Gallic and Scotch strains in the blood of the country, with its adventurous conquest of the land beyond the mountains and about the mouths of the Mississippi, with its border traditions, was both various and exciting to the imagination, hardly less than was the open air of the plains or the fascination of the Golden Gate in the West. The historical culture of the past gave a starting-point; education, books, travel were to be found

in a leisure class, who were the masters of the land. The power of nature, the power of race, and the power of the transmitted civilization of older times were not lacking; there was even a radiating centre. Virginia, in what was its great age, offered fair hope of true leadership in the supreme functions of national life. The group of the Revolution, which has made the State illustrious in history, lasted far on into the next age, and was distinguished not only by individual force, but by an enlightenment and generosity of mind of the happiest promise. Jefferson, in particular, who was the one great dreamer ever born in this land, was well fitted to be not only the fountain-head of a Declaration and of a University, but of a literature; or, if not the fountain-head, he, at least, held the rod to smite the rock. It is, perhaps, forgotten that in the fall of 1776 Jefferson, in association with four other Virginian gentlemen, proposed a general system of law in which one measure was for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. It is thus described:

"After a preamble, in which the importance of the subject to the Republic is most ably and eloquently announced, the bill proposes a simple and beautiful scheme whereby science (like justice under the institutions of our Alfred) would have been carried to every man's door. Genius, instead of having to break its way through the thick, opposing clouds of native obscurity, indigence, and ignorance, was to be sought for through every family in the commonwealth; the sacred spark, wherever it was detected, was to be tenderly cherished, fed, and fanned into a flame; its innate properties and tendencies were to be developed and examined, and then cautiously and judiciously invested with all the auxiliary energy and radiance of which its character was susceptible. What

a plan was here to give stability and solid glory to the Republic!"

It was surely a generous dream of these five Virginian gentlemen, and shows the spirit and outlook of that enthusiastic and public-spirited age in the Old Dominion. But, none the less, it was the light of a false dawn. Public spirit lied out in Virginia before these men were dead.

What was it that sterilized the fresh strength of the young nation in its fairest poetic region? The commonplace is to say that it was the institution of slavery; and, however far the analysis be pressed, it does not really escape from this answer, from the repeated burden of all lands and climates that genius, the higher life of man, withers in the air of social tyranny. Slavery is a mutual bond; to a true and impartial eye the masters are also caught and bound in the same chains with the slaves. Certain it is that literature in any proper sense ceased even to be hoped for, and ceased also to be respected as one of the vital elements of national life.

It is curious to observe that what the South afforded to general literature, in the main, was given into the hands of strangers. There was an interesting plantation life in Virginia on great estates, pre-Revolutionary, and not dissimilar in certain aspects to the life of the great Tory houses of the North, and of these latter no trace in literature survives; but the Virginian record was written by Thackeray's imagination. There was in the South of later days the great theme of slavery itself, a varied and mighty theme even before the civil war gave it epical range; in those days it was still only a story of individual human lives, but it was written in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," the one book by which the old South survives in literature, for better or worse. Characteristic Southern

scenery added more to Whittier's verse than to that of any poet of its own soil. It will also, perhaps, be regarded as curious, though not the less true, to observe that such literature as the South produced by native writers is so intimately connected with the national life that the closeness of its relation thereto is, broadly speaking, the measure of its vitality. This is plainly the case in so far as the intellectual vigor of the South was confined to legal and political channels, and found its chief outlet in the national councils through argument and oratory; and this is the chief part of the matter. But it is also true of such a writer of the imagination as Simms, the most distinguished prose author of the South and typical of its middle period, who found his best themes in national episodes; and it is true of Poe, the sole writer of the first rank, whose popularity and appeal were always in the mid-stream of contemporary national production, who lived in the national literary market-places, and entered into his fame by prevailing with the readers of the magazines and books of the national public. The colonial dependence of the South in literary matters was not on Europe, but on the North; its literature took up a provincial relation thereto; its authors emigrated, mentally and often bodily, thither; in other words, Southern literature does not exist, in any of its forms, political, fictional, or poetic, except in relation to the national idea, either as its product or as the result of reaction from it. The nation was the parent of all the higher activity of the mind of the South, fostered, sustained, and prospered it, even when that activity was directed against itself. There is nothing exceptional in this, for it belongs to the nature of literature to flourish where the social life of the community is largest, most vital, and culminative.

The decadence of the cultivated intellectual life of Virginia — and in that State alone did it exist in a virile condition — was coincident with the declining years of Jefferson and his great associates; but it did not take place without the continuing presence of the older and nobler ideals. The man in whom these were conspicuous, and who best represents what was most humane, enlightened, and fairest in the community, was William Wirt, now almost a forgotten name. He was primarily a man of the law, though distinguished as much for eloquence as for argument and reasoning; he had, besides, a certain dignity of mind. He was of the next generation after the Revolutionary fathers, and in him one feels the afterglow of a great time. He was still in touch with English literary tradition, and occasionally ventured on works beyond the view and interests of the law, the fruits of that true liberal education which he possessed. "The Letters of the British Spy" was his most significant book, a little work, and in itself of very trifling importance, but sufficient in its own day to win reputation akin to literary fame. What it discloses now to the rare reader of its pages is the mind of a Virginian of that generation, perhaps the best mind. The eighteenth century still rules in it, not merely in the form and method, but in the weight of the thought, the close, compact, accurate expression of the sense, the worth of the reflections; it is, in other words, intellectual in precisely the same way that Burke is intellectual. Still more striking, to one who attempts to place the book, the type of mind, the culture of the understanding, in time, is the old-fashioned classicism of the writer. This classicism was distinctly a Southern trait; not that it was not found elsewhere, but that in the South it was prized more dearly and lasted

longer than elsewhere. The place where the eighteenth century finally died was the South; and this mind of William Wirt was, perhaps, the last recognizable English mind where it burned or flickered. The advice that he gives to some young aspirant to cultivate facility in quoting from Latin authors, because it is agreeable to the Supreme Court, has a pleasant flavor of age. He was himself familiar with such classics, and with English writers like Boyle. These books of a large masculine stamp had formed his mind, and they live in his respect and affection. A predominant interest in oratory is noticeable, not as it is to-day, but the Ciceronian, Demosthenic stripe, the oratory of the British Parliament, by which one comes vividly near to Patrick Henry in the past, and understands better Calhoun and Webster in their turn. It is all gone now — the eighteenth century, the classicism, oratory, and all; and the shadow of it no longer remains at Washington. But it is clear that, save that there is here a legal mind interested in the solid thinking of Burke, Boyle, and Franklin, this is the parallel in Virginia to what Irving was in New York, himself by literary affiliation nearer to Addison and Goldsmith. Wirt was the companion figure to Irving, and marks the contemporaneousness of the eighteenth century growing moribund in both of these colonials; yet both, too, are sharers in the new life of the new land. Irving passed through the purgation and enlargement of long foreign residence, and his genius developed by virtue of a pure original literary gift, and he was continually a more accomplished writer, and finally made a great American name; Wirt, the national lawyer, remained in the surroundings amid which he was reared, and added nothing to what he had inherited from the literary past.

The society of Virginia in that generation is very clearly seen in Wirt's lively sketches of figures of the bar, and in the tone and substance of his correspondence. The mental strength of the men, and the original peculiarities of their character, are such as belong to annals of the bar everywhere; the circuit acquaintance of Lincoln, or of Choate, bears the same general stamp; but one is made aware of a classic tradition of composition and delivery, and also of a mode of life, in Wirt's sphere which are distinctive, and which are recognized as Virginia traits. Any discussion of Virginia matters finally turns to a description of the social life, which was the pride of the State and its chief pleasure. If books were to be written there, this would naturally be the subject. It was Kennedy, of Maryland, the friend and biographer of Wirt, who utilized this material, and thereby became the representative of intellectual taste, culture, and achievement, for his generation, in much the same way as Wirt had been in the former time, so far as literary remembrance is concerned. He was a gentleman of the same classical breeding, and of similar affiliations with the eighteenth century; but he was also more powerfully and directly affected by Irving's example and success. He undertook, in the leisure of a legal and political life, to portray the scenes, incidents, and characters of a Virginia plantation in "Swallow Barn," with a sketchy and rambling pen; and he succeeded in producing a little Virginia classic. The book is essentially on the level of Mrs. Stowe's "Old Town Folks," and similar provincial pictures of old country people, except that the touch is finer, and especially there is the pervading sense of literary reminiscence in the narrative declaring its kinship with masterly literature of the past. "Swallow Barn" is, in

effect, something between the "Roger de Coverley Papers" and "Waverley," with Irving as the interpreter, the author's guide and friend. It is a nondescript tale, made up of plantation scenes, genteel comedy, rural realism, figures from all conditions of life, crude superstitious tales, humors of the law, and one thing and another that a visitor might observe and set down as notes of a residence in the district. Typical Southern character of several varieties abounds in its pages. Yet as a literary description of the society it attempts to depict, it falls far short of any excellence which would allow it to be placed in the class to which it aspires.

Nor in his other writings does Kennedy succeed in making himself a man of letters. His books are entertaining, as diaries and travelers' tales please the reader, but not after the style and fashion of imaginative writers. It is rather the author himself who is significant, the refined and amiable gentleman whose taste is for literary elegance, and whose capacity to write is rather one of his mild accomplishments than an original gift, but whose title to rank as the representative of his community in letters is indisputable. A fine representative he is, too; one who would have graced any literary coterie of the English world; but a man of instincts and tastes, of sympathetic warmth and kindly humorousness, of sweet behavior, rather than a man of powers. He stands practically alone, too; for "Beverly Tucker," though of a similar sphere, and following Cooper instead of Irving, has a much laxer hold on remembrance. In these men the emasculated tradition of the eighteenth century, though reinforced by the fresh vigor of Irving's and Cooper's success with American subjects, died out; and Virginia life, never virile in imaginative creation, became

very slightly receptive even of the modern writers, though the Georgian poets, and especially Byron and Moore, were somewhat known.

The best gauge of the literary vitality of the South towards the middle of the century is the magazine which White founded at Richmond, "The Southern Literary Messenger." The mere fact that this periodical was started testifies to the presence of intellectual interests in the community. Education of the sort befitting a young gentleman of the day was provided for the youth of the ruling class by private tutors, by travel, by residence at Yale or Harvard, or elsewhere in the North, and by the home University of Virginia. This last institution, the work of Jefferson's foreseeing mind, never ceased to be one of the great schools of the nation. If its power and rank were to be measured by equipment after our present materialistic fashion, they might seem little enough; but if they are judged rather by the number and quality of the minds there educated, by the leadership of such minds in the State and nation, by the spread of their influence through the farther South and Southwest, the efficient force of the University must be highly rated as a factor in society. None of its students ever lost the impress of its classical studies and its standards of behavior. Poe, for example, shows in his writings more traces of his schooling than any other American author. Undoubtedly, the University is to be credited with the formation of the intellectual habit of the South, and its work was rather supplemented than displaced by foreign residence.

The Richmond magazine was essentially dependent on this body of University men and their friends throughout the South. It would be, nevertheless, a wild hyperbole to describe these men and their families as a reading

class; there was, properly speaking, no public at the South. The contents of the magazine, if Poe's exceptional work in its first two years be excluded, though not comparing unfavorably with its rivals elsewhere, are exceedingly tame and dreary. Local pride is much in evidence, and the presence of provincial reputations is acutely felt; but of literature there is truly not a trace. No democracy ever bred such a mediocrity of talent as this aristocratically constructed society. For one thing — and it is true of the whole literary past of the South — there is no interest in ideas; there are no ideas. There had been a time when Voltaire was much read in Virginia, though the traces of it are now well nigh lost in the dust-heap, and there had been radical thinking by young men; but no one came after Voltaire. Perhaps this is the fundamental trouble, after all; for how can literature flourish in the absence of ideas? The banality of the question indicates the poverty of the situation. A classical upbringing on Horace, a library of "The Spectator," "Waverley," and Moore's "Poems," taken in connection with even the best endeavor to achieve Ciceronianism or Addisonianism or any other imitatively perfect style, could not accomplish much by themselves. An air without ideas is the deadliest of literary atmospheres. This was perhaps less thoroughly true of Virginia than of the farther South, where political passion was more absorbing as time swung grimly on. The great age of Virginia culminating in the glory of her Presidents had gone by, and a less strenuous race had succeeded; but the men of South Carolina were stronger than their fathers had been, and the climax of her great age was to be in the civil war, towards which her social force moved for a generation with towering pride and fatal certainty. Yet one does

not find about Calhoun an intellectual group, nor is there anywhere about the statesmen of the Secession that air of letters and philosophy and the higher interests of man which was so marked a feature of the Revolutionary time. The literary state of this later period is most fully and characteristically shown, as is natural, in South Carolina itself, the true seat of Southern power then; but the lowness of the ebb is keenly apparent in the fact that the illustrative author is so inferior a man as Simms.

Simms was of Irish extraction, to which was due his literary gift, and the strain in him was one of recent immigration. The South had little part in his making, and gave him in the main no more than an environment and the nucleus of a fierce local patriotism. He was not one of the ruling class, but the child of an adventurer who himself found Charleston unendurable, and went farther into the Southwest to find a home and a living. Simms remained behind and grew up in the neighborhood of the traditions of the Revolution and the backwoodsmen. He was a man of overflowing animal force, self-assertive, ambitious, destined to be self-made. He had poetical susceptibility and dreaming faculty, a Celtic base in him, which led him to the composition of facile and feeble poems; but drifting off into fiction, as he tried his hand at all kinds of writing, he finally produced, amid the voluminous output, a few colonial romances by which he made a more lasting impression. They lack those qualities which make literature of a book, but they survive by virtue of their raw material, which has both historical and human truth; and in certain episodes and scenes he shows narrative and even dramatic power. He followed in Cooper's track in these tales, and chose the American subject near to him in the life of his part of the

country in the preceding generations of its conquest from the Indian and the Briton. The tales will, therefore, always retain a certain importance as a picture of social conditions and warfare. He, nevertheless, did not find himself accepted and honored in his own community. He made several journeys to the North, and had many friends among the literary men there, and published his books there. The North was his outlet into the world of letters.

In South Carolina it was felt that such a man as Legaré was the proper representative of Southern culture. Literary taste still clung to the library; it has the conservatism of the school-reader, and never passed the nonage of a good classical pupil. Contemporary literature, with romantic and realistic vigor, however closely allied to the masters of the North, had no vogue. It was considered that a Southern literature was impossible. The foolishness of Chivers testifies to that in Georgia no less than the powerful irascibility of Simms in South Carolina. Yet, with wonderful persistency, magazine after magazine was launched at Charleston, had its callow years of feebleness, and died. It seemed not only that the South could produce nothing of itself; what came to it from contact with the larger world of English speech could not take root in that soil. A few books of humor, long ago extinct, may be excepted; but, save for these, the condition of the country beyond Charleston was like that of the Ohio valley and the Iowa prairie in literary destitution. Even in New Orleans, now an old city, there was less of literature than in Charleston itself.

It is sometimes suggested that this blight which fell on the literary spirit everywhere in the South affected not only the reception of books actually written, but also the development of such minds of literary capacity as

were born in the community; that there was a discouragement of genius itself in the fact that while literature in common with all the fine arts requires an open career and honor for the poorest in social position and opportunity, here fixed aristocratic prejudice and materialistic self-satisfaction and the vanity and indifference that belong everywhere to irresponsible wealth, made success impossible. However that may be, it is clear that literature in the South had by the time of the civil war become dead. The position of Simms as the representative and central figure of the literary life there is made the more prominent by the companionship of younger men in his latter days; of Timrod, like the whippoorwill, a thin, pathetic, twilight note, and of Hayne, whom one would rather liken to the mocking-bird, except that it does no kind of justice to the bird. With them the literature of the old South ceased.

There remains the solitary figure of Poe, the one genius of the highest American rank, who belongs to the South. It is common to deny that he was distinctively a Southern writer, not so much on the score of his birth at Boston as because he is described as a world-artist, unrelated to his local origin, unindebted to it, and existing in a cosmopolitan limbo, denationalized, almost dehumanized. But mortal genius always roots in the soil, and is influenced and usually shaped by its environment of birth, education, and opportunity. It appears to me that Poe is as much a product of the South as Whittier is of New England. His breeding and education were Southern, his manners, habits of thought, and moods of feeling were Southern; his sentimentalism, his conception of womanhood and its qualities, of manhood and its behavior, his weaknesses of character, bore the stamp of his origin; his temperament

even, his sensibility, his gloom and dream, his response to color and music, were of his race and place. It is true that he was not accepted during his life by the society of Richmond any more than was Simms by the aristocracy of Charleston. But the indifference of an aristocratic society to men of letters not in its own set is no new thing; it belongs to the nature of such society the world over. It is more germane to observe that Poe's education, the books on which he fed, give us the best and fullest evidence available as to the kind and degree of literary culture possible to any Virginia youth of talent, and its range and quality serve to modify our idea as to the nature of that culture in the South, and lead us to a broader and truer conception of intellectual conditions there.

It does not appear that Poe in his early education or in the accessibility of books during his first manhood was at any disadvantage with his contemporaries in the North; the difference between him and his Southern compatriots was that he made the fullest use of his opportunities. He fed on Byron, Moore, and Coleridge, and as he went on in years he was among the first to hail Tennyson and the later writers, in prose as well as verse, and he always kept pace with contemporaneous productions. He did this before he left the South, as well as afterwards. He stands out from the rest because he had the power of genius, and was not, like Simms, a man of talent merely. When he came to the North, where he spent his mature life, he brought his Southern endowment with him. His relations with women were still sentimental; his attitude to men, his warm and frank courtesies to friends, his bitter angers towards others, his speech, garb, and demeanor denoted his extraction.

No stranger meeting him could have failed to recognize him as a Southerner. He always lived in the North as an alien, somewhat on his guard, somewhat contemptuous of his surroundings, always homesick for the place that he well knew would know him no more though he were to return to it. In his letters, in his conversations, in all reminiscences of him, this mark of the South on him is as plain as in his color, features, and personal bearing.

But, though this be granted, and there is no gainsaying it, it is universally maintained that his genius was destitute of any local attachment. I shall hardly do more than suggest a contrary view. In one respect, indeed, he seems wholly apart from the South. He was a critic, with well-reasoned standards of taste and art. The South is uncritical. The power of criticism, which was one of the prime forces of modern thought in the last century, never penetrated the South. There was never any place there, nor is there now, for minorities of opinion, and still less for individual protest, for germinating reform, for frank expression of a view differing from that of the community. In this respect the South was as much cut off from the modern world, and still is, as Ireland is from England in other ways. It lies outside the current of the age, and this is one reason why there was such an absence of ideas in its life. Poe, on the other hand, was a critic of independent mind and unsparing expression. Yet it is noticeable that he never criticised a Southern writer adversely, except when he had some personal animosity. It is only to be added that Poe was a critic who escaped from the environment within whose limits his critical power would have been crushed. But in his imaginative work, is it not true that the conception of character and incident in such tales as "William Wilson," "The Assignation," "The

Cask of Amontillado" are distinctly Southern? Are not all his women in the romantic tales elaborations of suggestions from Southern types? Is not "The Fall of the House of Usher" a Southern tale at the core, however theatrically developed? Poe is the only poet, so far as I know, who is on record as the defender of human slavery. It must not be forgotten that he grew up in a slave-holding State. There are traces of cruelty in Poe, of patience with cruelty, easy to find. "The Black Cat" could not have been written except by a man who knew cruelty well and was hardened to it. "The Pit and Pendulum" belongs in the same class. It is not any one of these items, but the mass of them, that counts. The morbid, melancholy, dark, grewsome, terrible, in Poe, seem to me to be related to his environment; these things sympathize with the South, in all lands, with Italy and Spain; as the Spaniard is plain in Cervantes, it may well seem that the Southerner is manifest in the temper of Poe's imagination, characterization, incident, atmosphere, and landscape. His tendency towards musical effects is also to the point. So Lanier tried to obtain such effects from landscape, trees, and the marsh, though Poe is free from Lanier's emotional phases, in which he seems, like Ixion, embracing the cloud.

Such, in brief, are some of the reasons that may justify one in seeing in Poe a great expression of the Southern temperament in letters. He certainly is the lone star of the South; and yet it may eventually prove that the song of Dixie is the most immortal contribution that the South has given to the national literature.

CHAPTER V

THE WEST

The West has ever been a name for romance, for the place of discovery, of the marvels of nature feeding the expectant and roused curiosity of those who break in on great solitudes, of heroic human forces put forth to take possession and to go on; and never in man's history was the panorama of the retreating horizon disclosed so swiftly, with such spectacular changefulness, as in the opening of the American continent, when veil after veil withdrew — the dense wilderness of the Genesee and the southward timberland, the open prairies of the vast river-country, the long roll of the plains of the Sunflower trail, the mountains, the deserts, till at last, with descents of loveliness, the scene debouched at the Golden Gate of the Pacific. Never since the Hellenes first looked on the Mediterranean had there been such a moment of beauty and power in the great human migration. Immensity and diversity strove with each other in the century-long revelation. To our backward look the land is full of adventurous experience; the river-voyagers, the fur-traders, the explorers, the gold-hunters are like nomadic waves over it; the Indian is hardly more than an incident, like antelope and buffalo, so much is the imagination taken with the white man's life in such surroundings. It is of this national *mise-en-scène,* this race-energy, that those old-fashioned writers thought who used to demand of us a literature "on the same scale as the country." But no

nation yet ever produced literature in the time of its settlement on the soil, and our history conforms to this old record. The legend-breeding time has gone, and no legend yet appears; and in its place has come, all glamour scattered, the West that is built in the love of home more than in the love of gold, banded by railways, knotted with great cities, and filled far and wide with the peace of natural labor, domesticity, education; and the land settles to its rest.

Argonaut or pioneer, early or late, of whatever stripe of adventurer, the first wanderers were no makers of books. The scientific explorers left important works of the highest interest in their sphere, but they owned neither the style nor the matter of literature. History waited for Parkman. The part that books held in the farms, villages, and towns which grew up in the settlement was the same as in the original communities from which the emigrants came. The broad northward sweep of the New England trail was thick with the transplanted pulpit, school, and ideas of the old Puritan coast; the stream from Pennsylvania and the Southeast was less marked with intellectual traits. Literature was still an instrument of the practical life, including morality in that term; it fed the sermon, informed the political debate, and gathered especially about the newspaper press and the numerous growth of feeble and short-lived periodicals. Certain regions were especially favored, in particular the country of the Western Reserve in northern Ohio and a little tract of Indiana where, within a county's breadth, were born the greater number of Western writers who achieved reputation in the second half of the last century. There was, too, a Unitarian outpost at Louisville, in Kentucky, and a literary spirit there and an opportunity

for education, which made that the most cultivated city of the South beyond the Alleghanies, though it was still too nigh the Southern blight to reap to the full the fruits of early advantage. Poe, by virtue of his journalistic interest, reached farther with the circle of his correspondence than any of his contemporaries, and he touched St. Louis, on the extreme hem of possible literary enterprise.

Throughout all this area school, seminary, academy, college, and what has since grown into the University, were part and parcel of the life of the State, the denominations and the ambitious and enterprising youth; and light belles-lettres, such as Prentiss cultivated and Thomas collected, fluttered pale and premature in the complaisant press; but there was no true original growth. The literature of tradition, used for traditionary purposes in traditionary ways, was still the only literature with mastering power; what was newly produced was either compounded of the old or weakly imitated it. As the settlement moved farther West, towards and beyond the great barriers, the intellectual life took on more and more the character of missionary enterprise, such as Starr King stood for in California. In these vast stretches, under a sky that of itself would have generated again the heavenly Zeus in a pre-Christian race, amid a land where elemental grandeurs are closer to mankind than they have been since the primitive world, the imagination remained unstirred to expression, and the book carried into the waste was the Mormon Bible. It is not strange. It is only one more manifestation of the fact that a race which has begun to write is already old; literature flowers only from a stock long planted in the earth; it may be carried to a new soil, but it bears the true blossom of that soil only

after centuries of absorption. Literature as an instrument of the practical life the West always had in full measure, as the coast colonies had possessed it and employed it; imagination, in its practical function to plan a nation, and in its sympathetic activities to bind society together, and with the past and future, it also had and used; but the ideal imagination, the power to recast truth and remake the world, had not arrived in the West, nor, indeed, has it ever arrived there. The whole great country, with all its civilization, its prosperity, its education — all its immeasurable success in the practical sphere of what is necessary and wholesome for the entire life of man in body and mind — has not produced so much in literature for the world as have the Russian steppes; and, like Turgenieff, Bret Harte lived abroad, and Joaquin Miller, like Tolstoï, was a hermit-dreamer at home.

The earliest stir of original literary impulse in the West was by way of humor. The population was a gathering of strongly marked race-types from many lands, a museum and nursery of incongruities; the new environment was an added element of contrast in a society quickly adapting itself to changed and strange conditions; freedom of life gave the rein to forceful eccentricity and to weakness of foible and foolishness. Many a man found his true character in a day, who, under the pressure of social convention, insincere profession, and the general tyranny of what was expected of him, might in his birthplace never have suspected his own existence; and no effective secrecy was possible in the all-revealing air of that character-testing struggle. Under such circumstances humor emerged as a saving grace. Laughter was bred into the people; it solved many situations, it lessened

the friction of close personal contact, it made for peace, being the alternative for ill-nature or a blow. The constancy of it shows its spontaneity. In the camps of the miner, on the river steamboats, in the taverns of the court circuit, there sprang up inexhaustible anecdotes, rallies of wit, yarns, and fanciful lies and jokes on the dullard or the stranger. If it be true that our unliterary humorists were rather a newspaper product of the East, and that they took origin from some of these same elements, it was, nevertheless, in the West that American humor most flourished, for there the conditions were found united. It was as if all the world had gone on a picaresque journey by general consent in various quarters, and at the chance round-up for nightly rest and refreshment fell to telling what, and especially whom, they had met with. Out of this atmosphere came Lincoln, our greatest practical humorist, with that marvelous power, turning all he touched to wisdom; and on the free, imaginative side, Mark Twain, our capital example, was blood and bone of this Western humor. He is its climax, although, fun for fun's sake being his rule, he often goes sprawling, for fun seldom stands alone; for long life it has to mate with something, to blend with other elements, as in the great humorists. Truth must touch it, as in Lincoln's case, or character, as in Shakespeare's, before it goes home to the mark. In its living forms in the West, character was always near to it, and a Franklin-like lesson was often its honey. Extravaganza is a kind of practical joke on the mind, and with other practical jokes falls to a secondary place. Humor that mixes with the truth of life is the better bread. In the West there was one omnipresent element with which it had natural affinity — the quality of picturesqueness. This existed in all

forms, in character, incident, and setting. It was a foregone conclusion that when the artist came he would combine these — humor and picturesqueness — with each other, and both with romance.

The artist came in Bret Harte. He was not, like Mark Twain, born of the stuff in which he worked. His art is not that of the native life becoming conscious of itself and finding original expression. He was a visitor from the outer world, Eastern-born and Eastern-bred. The son of a Greek professor who taught in a college at Albany, in New York, he grew up in a library, bred on literature from boyhood, when alone such breeding takes, with his brain stuffed carelessly with the best English humor and romance, and, indeed, if "Don Quixote, "Gil Blas," "The Arabian Nights," and "Tales of the Genii" be added, the best in the world. Still a stripling youth, he was flung into the Californian ferment, impressionable and sharp to observe, with eyes trained on contemporaneous man under the tutelage of the art of Dickens, with its large resources of comedy, sentiment, and kindliness. He had shown the literary gift from childhood; he could meditate his experience, brood over his creatures and love them, and his skill in language was fine to serve his ends. The relaxed moral strain of convention about him loosed his tongue and let him have his say of the thoughts and feelings within him. The environment was crowded with artistic elements, and he began to select, with directness and simplicity, and combine and create; and, without knowing it, he had found the gold that grows not dim and melts not away. His graphic power was great; the vividness of the scenes, the sharpness of the character, the telling force of the incident, the reality of the talk, the simple depth of the sentiment, made up a

body of human truth, clear, picturesque, sincere, and homespun, which went at once to the heart.

It is maintained, perhaps generally, that Bret Harte's tales are pure inventions, and that what he describes had no actual existence in the mining country. He himself asserted the contrary, saying that he found in reality the starting-point of both character and incident; and I believe him. The limitations of his genius lead me to do so. He lacked power of the sort that constructs and feeds from fecund observation and sympathy a great novel; though he accomplished all that his specific material was capable of, in verse, his poetry is tame when he leaves his peculiar ground; his distinction lies in his short tales, and he continued through life to work the same narrow vein; this argues adherence to a known subject, dependence on experience and memory, the presence of a basis of actuality. A free imagination, in the sense of irresponsible invention, would have been less trammelled.

Indeed, it is Bret Harte's artistic truth that constitutes the novelty and charm of his work, and makes its way in the wide world, far from the cañons where it was cradled. It has democratic power. The vital persistence of human nature in men and women, the primitive emotions and virtues of our kind still instinctively put forth, to comfort and support life in comradery, independent of civilization left behind, and institutions dropped out, and the habits of orderly society disused — the man in his natural manhood, the woman in her natural womanhood — this is the core of the life he sets forth; and the human qualities in his tales have their brilliancy of tone and effect, because they are so disengaged from convention, institution, use and wont, and show the clear grain.

Character is the mark he aims at, and unless character has truth, it is naught. He had seen men in undress; and though he noticed the costume and the drawl, the shabby or miserable detail, still, for his eyes, the man remained, and was the absorbing object of his interpreting art. This is, in literature, to have democratic power.

With it goes the philanthropic instinct, the wish to bring out the man hidden there, obscure in the caking of circumstance, of the working-day world, of slovenliness, of vice and crime, and to make him appear in his original human nature, above the drudge, the loafer, the criminal that he is to the casual eye and the hard mind. Toleration, which goes hand-in-hand with personal liberty, and is its unfailing companion, is a necessary ingredient in his human art — the art, it need hardly be said, of Dickens, for Bret Harte derives from Dickens as plainly as Irving from Goldsmith, and Cooper from Scott, and he gracefully acknowledged his indebtedness. It is those who condemn the art of Dickens as tawdry, sentimental, deformed by caricature, that see no reality in Bret Harte.

The same persons sneer at the whole range of humane effort from black suffrage to criminal reform as sentimentality, and have yet to learn the lesson of democracy — so hard as it is for the artificial man, who, even in a republic, is the man of caste, to believe that God has sown human nature as wide as the daisies, as numerous as the waves, and made earth noble with its multitude as the heaven with stars.

Bret Harte represents indestructible courage and love as natural elements in man's bosom, shown in action and self-forgetful virtue, and always respected by the onlookers, however vulgar, unkempt, debauched; and he

blends this eternal moral with comedy, and even grotesqueness, without tarnishing it. The West gave him all the human garniture of the scene in character, incident, and the action's glow; and it must be believed, too, that as in local color he was faithful to his material, he was also a true representative of the Western spirit in this democratic, philanthropic, tolerant art, by means of which his youthful temperament, highly cultivated by letters as it had been, found imaginative embodiment. This humorous romancer, gentle, tender, hospitable, and just, so finely sensitive to the unspoken pathos of the hard, starved, brutal lot of the miner's life, was, in spirit as well as in the literal facts, an exponent of the new world's story — an American in every fibre. Otherwise his reputation would hardly have exceeded the limits of his editorial-room, and spread not only through the East, but abroad. England would not have continued to read his writings after his own land had tired of them. He made a universal appeal, though working always through a local type of no great range of character or adventure; he did this by fidelity to primitive human feelings in natures so deep and simple that their profound truth almost escapes observation in the powerful impression they make, and, of course, much is masked by his artistic method. He is more than the sketcher of a passing phase of pioneer days in the gold mountains; that would be little enough; he created lasting pictures of human life, some of which have the eternal outline and pose of a Theocritean idyl. The supreme nature of his gift is shown by the fact that he had no rival and left no successor. His work is as unique as that of Poe or Hawthorne.

One other author bears the characteristics of the West

on his imagination. Joaquin Miller had the endowment of a poet, and has taken up into his verse the physical atmosphere of the great solitudes, and the free career of life led amid them. The ranges, the deserts, the sweep of the plains, the flood of burning light, the glory of color, are all caught in his framing lines; the startling phenomena of torrent and blazing prairie, and the sudden catastrophes of the cattle-lands are there; the scene, illimitable and lonely, where life is but a speck, is mirrored both physically and in feeling; but often his muse itself seems lost in the vastness. His gift is lyrical, not dramatic, and nature is more than man in it; yet the human life he renders is also appropriate. It is a life that is only the passion of living, a loose of energy, unbridled, fearless, maddened by its own liberty; its body is sensation, or such action as is only sensation in another form — an intoxication with the stream of life flowing through the man; it is clear emotion, and laughs at all convention and restraint — the freedom of the outlaw, the filbuster, the desperado. So far as there is any specific local color, the Spanish-Mexican predominates in both landscape and character; and the latter, except in the point of passion, is rather an affair of the accoutrements — the horse is more than the man. He is a riding poet, of course; the lope of the prairies is in his fine lines, and is the best part of them. There is a clear poetic power here, atmospheric, pictorial, deep-breathed; one wonders at the seeming barrenness, not to say paucity, of the result. The whole is a monotone; there is the same lover, the same maiden — the same wild grandeur of nature, the same sense of the infinite in both, the universe without and the passion of living beating within, and this harmony of combination once established is never varied

from, though sometimes it is given by fragments instead of in its completeness.

The part of Byron in it is manifest, for Joaquin Miller goes back to Byron, as Bret Harte does to Dickens; and if it is curious to observe Byronism, the offspring of continental despairs, stamp an image of itself, in however lower a degree, in the untamed life of the West, this is evidence how constant and instinctive in the world of society, under its present conditions, is that mood for which Byronism gave the imaginative and sentimental formulas in all lands of modern civilization. The delight in elemental grandeur, the love of freedom, which were the noblest traits of Byron, exist here in less power, or in their less excellent forms; on the human side man is, in this verse, of the pirate type, and woman has Turkish mobility, while the melodramatic pose of both action and passion, and the note of egotistic melancholy, are leading features; such is the literary tradition followed, and it is secondary in the work.

What is primary is easily perceived — the sense of the mighty landscape, the enthusiasm for its great phases, the delight in the adventurous occupations of the men, the lust of life in the wild open; the poet handles these things best because he loves them. The secondary, Byronic elements, enter the verse only to impair it; and this happens especially in the realm of character which turns theatrical. In "The Arizonian" — the most striking portrait — vivid and suggestive as much as it is, by means of color, music, and feeling, the poet misses the type, and brings it out flattened and defaced. "With Walker in Nicaragua," the best poem, though in Byron's manner, has also a quality of its own, a verve and motion which make it sure of just appreciation; and one cannot

help thinking that had it been found in some old French manuscript, as a *chanson* of some Norman filibuster in the pirate African seas, it would be the delight of poets and the treasure trove of scholars. But there was some lack of power in Joaquin Miller which denied to him the summation of his qualities in the concentrated creative faculty. His monotone, with all its sonority, dulls the ear, as his color wearies the eye; the senses, overtired, cease to act, and the mind has not been awakened. One misses the strong, intellectual force that lay back of all Byron's work, and the landscapes of Arizona are no substitute for it.

What of reality there was in Joaquin Miller's work it would be a subtle matter to define, for actual things suffer strange transformations in a true poet's mind, without losing their original nature. He loved the Western country with native passion; once, it is true, a will-o'-the-wisp of fame drew him across the Atlantic to wander about the Mediterranean and to pose in London drawing rooms, but his heart never strayed from it own natural horizon. He is opposed to Bret Harte in one capital point: the latter drew the characters he knew just as he knew them, still in the toils of work, chance, and circumstance, in the bonds of men living together for good or ill, in the necessary ways of social beings; but Joaquin Miller endeavored to interpret that ideal of the free life, beyond the toils and out of the bonds, which is one conception of Western opportunity and practice — the life without a rein. The instinct from which the dream springs is fundamental in mankind; it has sent hermits to the desert, yeomen to the greenwood, and gallants to the Spanish Main out of mind; and on the great plains and in the canyons it has had its adventurers. In literature it be-

longs especially with that beatification of Nature which took place in the Revolutionary times; and the eagle and the lion and the "noble savage" were supposed to exemplify its blessedness. It is a false dream, because restraint is the law of both man's power and his happiness; but it has always had its followers, a crew of men longing for it and striving after it in the reckless vigor of young manhood; and such men, such a spirit, there were in the Western conquest. Joaquin Miller catches some of the traits, the impulses, the joys of it; but in rendering it by means of the Byron convention, peopling the lone landscape with the operatic ghosts of Conrad and Haidee, he gives such an impression of falsity that what truth there may be escapes. It is only where the touch of personal experience is plain, where the individualization exceeds the power of imitative fancy to conjure, where the horse is felt under the rider, and a man's hand in the grasp of a man, as in the Nicaragua tale, that this life and this spirit realizes itself as something that might have been. Wherever the truth may lie, as to the reality of the inspiration and the interpretation, it will remain Joaquin Miller's peculiar trait that he alone has attempted to transfer to imagination this emotional phase of the West, which lies so nigh to all romancing thoughts of the free life there; if it turns to melodrama in his hands, it should be remembered that it has done the same in the hands of all poets, at all times. Those who are restless under society, and are fond to imagine wild freedom, and to think of its place as in the uncivilized tracts of earth, will continue to find in his verse one passionate record of what they seek.

A third author, Lew Wallace, felt the influence of the romantic West, acting on his historical imagination.

"The Fair God," a story of the Aztecs, holds no great place in our literature; but it was in this tale that the author first exercised his invention, and that it was due to his Southwestern experience is certain. Oriental traits are recognizable in Joaquin Miller; there are touches of Arabia in his lines; and the coloring and atmosphere of Arizona and New Mexico, the blend of Spanish antiquity in the landscape, were in some sort a preparation in Lew Wallace for his treatment of the Scriptural times and scenes in the work by which he is known, "Ben Hur." This story, too, hardly rises into the domain of literature, but the pietistic romance has always been popular in our communities, and should be reckoned with in an account of our literary life. At an earlier date domesticity afforded the substance and sphere of this novel as in "The Wide, Wide World"; but, in Lew Wallace's rendering, history took its place, and, on the whole, the appropriate history. He derives, it is true — for all our authors have a sponsor — from Victor Hugo in the main and characteristically, though he lies, of course, also in the general stream of historical fiction; and it would be futile to seek, in his stirring tale of races long gone by, the stamp of Western civilization, except so far as it was absorbed by the West in common with the whole country. But it is not fanciful to find in his impressions of the Western land that original sympathy which, in his genius, was to find so foreign and distant material. Such works as he wrote — and they have been described as apart from all American life — are brooded over in long solitude, and proceed from very deep and elemental impressions of a vast world. It is, at least, noticeable that the third writer of the West was, like Bret Harte and Joaquin Miller, a romancer pure and simple. The mood, the point of view, the temperament

belong to the Western environment, so far as it is an environment of the imagination, and a great gulf divides these three writers from all others who have been characteristically of that part of the country. They stamp the enduring literature of the early West as romantic to the core. It is true that the settled and civilized West — the West of the railways and the cities and the colleges — has also now produced books; its glades and birds have had their poets, its country towns and traveled roads their novelists, sweet in melody, admirable in realistic rendering, the sincere and honest work of our own generation; but they fall outside the limits of this survey, and may be left to later critics of a new time. Within the limits here maintained, the nascent literature of the West lay wholly in the fortunes of these three romancers, each in his sphere of the tale, the poems, and the novel — Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller, and Lew Wallace.

CHAPTER VI

THE ACHIEVEMENT

If it were true, according to the old saying, which is by some reputed wise, that the nation is happiest which has no history, the same maxim might hold good of a people without a literature; for literature in its great forms is in some sort connected with times of national stress and upheaval, and genius, which is its medium, is made active by a similar unrest and excitement in itself. The secondary character of American literature in its first century, its inferiority in mass and quality to the contemporary productions of England and France, is everywhere acknowledged; and the youthfulness of our national life, our absorption in material and professional pursuits, in subduing nature and applying self-government and developing economic and social relations, and generally in finding ourselves, which is the business of youth, besides many other similar considerations, are alleged as concurrent causes of this delayed and incomplete success in literary creation. In any exposition of our national achievements of the last century the fine arts, and among them literature, would occupy a small corner in comparative importance when set in competition with the general results of our total human labor. Perhaps one reason for this, as good as any of those just summarized, is the prosperity, the usually regular and free movement of development, in a word, the happiness of the people — the general peace, the absence of revolt, of sudden and profound

change in ideal ends, of revolutionary aspiration, of all that makes for desperate battle and deep desire in the spirit of man. Great as our political and social growth has been, powerful and broad as the forces of humanity and freedom have shown themselves, and deepening down with wider inclusions among the whole body politic, the marvelous thing has been the gentleness of the process on the whole; only one principle was "rained in blood," and the dawn, save for that, was without the traditional "thunderpeal" of a new age. And what is true of national life is true also of individual genius; our men of letters, taken together, have been men of quietness.

The great European movement of the last century in literature, on the other hand, was that romanticism which was the blossoming bower where the blood of the Revolution was turned to forms of beauty and passion and marvel; its leaders were restlessly alive, and remote as their work in imagination and intellect and sentiment might be from anything obtusely political or social, verse and prose alike were fed from careers of moral, intellectual, emotional strife, from a movement in the minds of men seeking new gods and revealing new gospels in every part of man's and nature's life. It is a vain task to look for anything corresponding to this in the literature of our era of good feeling, although, as we were an intellectually dependent and colonial-minded people and importers of literary fashions, some traces of the romantic revolution may be found in our earlier books; but these are truly "naught," if the scale of the century be applied to them. The early American romance, with which our imaginative prose began, however interesting to ourselves historically and to a literary student as an illustration of taste, was an offshoot of the operatic and sentimental tale, the wonder

novel and its congeners in the radical school, and was secondary to the works of Mrs. Radcliffe, Godwin, and Lewis. Charles Brockden Brown's novels, which have resisted resurrection more pertinaciously than any other victim of the publishers' mania for the uncopyrighted, marked a moment, but marked it with a grave instead of an immortality; and Allston, with his thin Monaldi, and the elder Dana, with his Byron-Bulwer stripe, exhaust the list of remembered names in fiction till Sir Walter Scott's great tradition of the romantic treatment of history and humble life was taken over by Cooper, who was its earliest and last American master. Meanwhile the classical manner of Addison, both in humor and all else, had survived the extinction of the manor-line at home by transplantation here in Irving and his successors, whose pleasantness in letters has continued to the days of Curtis and Warner. These three strands of the early pseudo-romance, the historical romance, and the Addisonian light essay, constitute our characteristic borrowings from the mother-country, and they are all in prose. In poetry there was no such appropriation; Shelley and Keats, Tennyson and Browning, Swinburne and Rossetti, have found no continuance here in any native work of enduring worth, and the same is true of later prose authors of England. On the small scale, and among our minor writers, there has been imitativeness in tone and theme; there have been little Dickenses and even little Mrs. Hemanses, the Matthewses and Sigourneys of our middle period; but in the main and on the part of our national writers the English tradition has been incorporated in our literature by a broad academic culture from the past rather than by immediate and conscious imitation and transference in the present day.

Our colonial dependence in literature, in fact, has not been so pre-eminently English as is commonly thought. It has been far more a European matter than is appreciated. Longfellow, our first poet of culture, is the representative case; and his service in making Continental poetry known in this country is too much neglected. To others, as to him, the past, whose charm won on the imagination and affections, was one of the castled Rhine, of lovely Italy, of romantic Spain, of French cathedral towns, and the picturesqueness of Holland, quite as much as of the mother-country. The German influence was dominant in transcendentalism at Boston, and the long line of Dante scholars, from George Ticknor to Charles Norton at Harvard, is significant of a live tradition in poetic outlook and taste; and the mention of Ticknor, with his history of Spanish literature, recalls the curious closeness of Spain to our own literary land, in the histories of Prescott and Motley, and from Irving to Lowell. Howells, too, has in his earlier days borrowed from Italy for description and literary history, and in his later career has done, in some measure, for Continental contemporary fiction what Longfellow did for the treasures of verse, and in our own fiction the tribute of "The Marble Faun" to Italy is a supreme instance of international gratitude. It is to be observed that this connection with the Continent, so natural, so continuous, so radiant with what it gave to us, was one through culture, either literary or artistic, and not one through action; it was the past of these lands, not their present — the antiquity, learning and sentiment of their past, not the romanticism of their still vital present — that attracted the American interest, except in the late and single case of Howells in fiction; and of this culture and its effects in art and taste, Long-

fellow, as has been said, was the clear star. Try as he might to be American in theme, in "Hiawatha," "Evangeline," "Miles Standish," and the "New England Tragedies," and in many shorter pieces, his art owed its simplicity, its mellowness, its adequacy, its golden success, to this culture working out in the new soil of an American nature, its refined charm in expression. This same power of culture, less perfect because more exclusively English, gave dignity to Lowell's verse, and matter also to his prose. It was brain-culture, through contact with the old books of the world, and with what then passed for neoplatonic and Oriental thought, which gave atmosphere to Emerson's universe. Wherever the subject be taken up, it will be found that what is called our colonialism is very much misapprehended if it be thought of as an English tie only; we have not been in the last century intellectually an English colony, but we have been deeply indebted for impulse and guidance, for outlook and method, for a thousand subtly shaping influences, to all the world beyond the seas, where both thought and life are old. It is singular that our recognizable dependence on France seems so slight; it is, perhaps, only to be seen in Henry James.

It would appear, then, that our literature has been sundered from the great movement of romanticism abroad and its incarnations of democracy, philanthropy, and science, its experiments and pilgrimages; and that our contact with the Continent has been with its past in history, sentiment, poetic form, critical canon, artistic impression and the like, from which our men of letters derived culture, and a certain dignity and grace of literary demeanor, in the scholarly group of which Irving, Longfellow, and Lowell are typical names. But if sundered,

the nation has had a life of its own, less turbulent and perplexed, less liable to chaotic and eccentric motions, less on the grand scale of internal battle and social upheaval, but rather a life of assured self-command, intelligent and slow change, conservative in its essence.

If one forgets Wordsworth, he will become aware more surely in Bryant of the crystalline horizons, the clear-seen mountain lines, and the bald hill-sides of our rugged but ether-bathed landscape; and will find something of the elemental in nature portrayed in his poems with a severity and grand simplicity that befit the new land yet uninhabited save by the far-off water-fowl; it is an original, powerful, almost Biblical note, fit to be the first verse of our chapter. Something of the same simplicity, serenity, ascetic power, but belonging rather to air than earth, as if granite were spiritualized into light, there is in Emerson, as elemental in the sphere of thought as Byrant in that of nature; and it is not in the bleakness of one or the awkwardness of the other that the American quality is found, but in this simplicity which is so absolute and basal as almost to evade statement, and in their vision and thought, rendered in literature, is what Grant and Lincoln are, rendered in character.

Emerson was intellectually cultured, as was said above; but his power of expression in poetry was lacking in fluidity, roundness, and ease; his poetry, artistically, is Byzantine in its crudity, like his very figure, so stiff, so serious, so formal in its formlessness; but that is the accident of the body; the insight, the imagination, the flash of originality from within or of beauty caught from without, make the inwardness of the verse, and judged by the great qualities of the spirit, and especially by that greatest one of an absolute unconscious simplicity, Emer-

son's poetry pierces heaven at the highest altitude of all our bards. His prose essays, liberating as they are to the mind and stimulating to the spiritual life, are on a lower level; his patriotic sayings, his great American lines — and no poet has so many, bright as the lightnings of Zeus — are in his verse; but his essays are the flower of transcendentalism, which stood in American life for religious revolt sympathetic with the movement of enlightenment on the Continent, and they are the result of that internal conflict consequent on a change in ideals in the spiritual sphere which has so often been the motive power of great works in literature, but was here attended by none of that dark stress which is shown in the Revolutionary poets of all Europe, and even in the life, though not the works, of Cardinal Newman.

The whole transcendental movement, in its literary record, is a striking instance of that absence of turbulence, of desperate battle, and deep desire, in our literature, which has been emphasized as characteristic in our men of letters. In Hawthorne only is there found the sense of spiritual peril, and he presents it objectively and historically as a primary experience in the moral life of the founders of New England, most significantly in "The Scarlet Letter," and again less dramatically and more speculatively in "Donatello"; but in none of his work is it a religious struggle, — it is a moral catastrophe that he illuminates. Hawthorne is, for this reason, the most profound and vitally spiritual in his expression of human experience, the deepest prober of the breast, of all our authors, whether poets or prose-writers; and he comes to this overmastering interest in sin, rather than crime, and in the operations of conscience and the recovery of the soul through suffering and its entrance on a greater

life thereby, because of his American inheritance and environment, his American genius.

Bryant is a fading and almost Ossianic figure, a wintry ghost, to most of us; Emerson and Hawthorne, a figure of light and a figure of darkness, are the companion spirits, American through and through, who now seem the greatest American writers of the last century. Longfellow and Lowell, associated together in fame as in life, may find, the one a wider acceptance, the other an academic vogue. Longfellow's poetry is less valued now by the critical class, but it is not likely that his hold on the homes of his countrymen has lessened; the critical class has lost in the sense of refinement, and is dull to the quality of Longfellow; but his trust, his humanity, his hospitality to the joys and sorrows of domestic life, his tenderness, his consolation, his noble nature, his just taste in what to say and what to leave unsaid about the crises of lives, not tragic, but touched with human things that "have been and may be again," his companionableness for souls not over-strenuous, but full of all the pieties of life endearing life — these things give him long lease of fame; and within his unemphatic range he has an unsuspected variety, and thereby expresses without weariness, except to the life-jaded, an American nature of such sweetness, refinement, and purity that it has become almost exemplary of an ideal of the literary life on this soil. Lowell has not touched his people to the same degree; he is over-intellectual for some, and has defects of taste which repulse others, and great unevenness; he remains our only critic of the first rank, but in other respects his fame seems a doubtful matter. To these names, with full right, that of Poe is added because of his originality in lyric

tone and motive, and its power, now long demonstrated, in this country and abroad; and also because of the peculiar horror of his tales.

No other name would be suggested as of the first rank in our literature, and therefore worthy to be mentioned in a century's achievement; or if suggested, none would pass unchallenged.

The works of standard authors, accepted by a nation, constitute its true achievement in literature; but in so strict a definition the bulk of writing in any age is lost sight of, and the sense of real performance is less than it should be. There have been hundreds of American writers, and scores of them have been successful novelists, nature-writers, humorists, dramatists, poets; and in a more minute view they would be seen to have contributed much that would deserve recognition in a fuller statement. The novelists after Cooper have given expression to many provincial or metropolitan phases of American life, that serve as local transcripts of manners and places and studies of some careers, and these may prove historically interesting; the humorists have caught a distinct flavor from the time, and Mark Twain is their captital type of popular celebrity; and so the other classes, the describers of nature, of whom Thoreau is the leader, the sentimentalists of whom Mitchell is the most enduring, and the others, each with its head, have accomplished success in their day and generation.

In the fields of endeavor that neighbor literature, in history, oratory, state papers, and the like, distinction has been won as high in those provinces of expression as any in the pure literary art. But to examine our literature in this comprehensive way in order to exhibit our true performance would be as vain a task as to endeavor to

show our inventive genius by a catalogue of the patent-office instead of by those supreme examples which have been gifts to all the world. The national life, it is true, has found expression in many authors besides those of genius, and in many men of literary faculty approaching genius — its moral experience in Whittier, its democratic crudity in Whitman, its later culture in the latter day poets, its abolished Southern civilization in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," its border and mining-camp romance in Bret Harte; but the writers in these cases belong in a secondary class in comparison with Bryant, Irving, Cooper, Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, and Poe. These last are the authors whom the nation as a whole regards as its great writers in pure literature, and none besides. They are themselves in a second class in comparison with the English or French authors of the century; and, in fact, they fall, in almost a solid group, just below the greatest names in English literature, and above all others who are reckoned as second in England, and Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe are unique each in his kind. The work they and those associated with them have done has been distinguished by artistic conscientiousness, to a degree rarely paralleled, and also by purity; no nation has so pure, few so painstaking, a literature; it fails of the highest rank only because it lacks inspiration, passion, that deep stirring of the spirit of man which, with all its cost, is the cause of his highest reach in imagination, intellect, and desire.

CHAPTER VII

RESULTS AND CONDITIONS

In the survey of our literature from the point of view of its relations to the country at large, it is impossible to escape a sense of fragmentariness in the products, of disproportion between the literary energy and the other vital powers of the people, and of the inadequacy of literature as a function of national expression. Its geographical distribution is uneven, and reflects the movement of population; its seat has been mainly in the Northeast: in power of interpretation of social life it had depth in New England only, and as it spread southward and westward it grew in superficiality. Humor hence alone is native to the whole country: and hence, perhaps, Mark Twain, in that sphere, most nearly approaches the position of a national writer, though he is characteristically Western in his origins and his mind, as Holmes, much more narrowly, belongs to the extreme East, and is there the member of a provincial caste. But there has been no national author in the universal sense; no man molded so American in genius as to appeal to all parts equally, and to express the common nature either by an intense spiritual concentration or by diverse representation. Our literature is rightly described as a sectional product, in a stage lying beyond its original colonial condition, it is true, but not advanced to national unity; and here again it reflects the fact that our political union preceded that community of mental and moral culture, of ideas, beliefs, purposes, of deep decisions and fundamental agreements,

which is still, in relation to the whole country, partial and approximate only.

The clefts in the nation are intellectual and moral, but they exist; and our literature, in its history, discloses their direction and depth. Its absorption by the people still has geographical and racial limitations, not to be overcome in our day by this elder group of writers. In America the literary historian has to deal with a transplanted civilization which originally allowed widely varying degrees of culture both in the different ranks of society and territorially; the extent of the country, in connection with other causes, enabled these initial diversities between South and North, border and sea-coast, to resist unification in such general and prevailing homogeneity as really subsisted in all. Under these conditions it was inevitable that our literature should be produced in local centers, and make an imperfect appeal in its own day, and be taken into the common consciousness with incomplete and uneven success by the nation in its length and breadth. It is, indeed, rather by this formative influence in entering into national life, in the process of time, than by its origin out of such a life that our literature becomes broadly indigenous; but it is hardly to be thought that the exponents of old New England or of the new West — especially in view of the great and continuing historic rift in principle, sentiment, and memory which separates the South from a free participation in our moral and imaginative life — will become national even with the lapse of years. Our first authors represent an historic moment of great interest, a new literary beginning; they express the mutually excluding social spheres in which they were bred, and taken together they include all native imaginative life that was to find permanent embodiment.

It belonged to the environment that, in so far as they were American, they should be sectional.

It was also inherent in the conditions that the literary continuers of a transplanted civilization should hark back to the times and lands of its origins and home. The tie of paternity is stronger than the fraternal bond, and nearer of kin; and the minds of our writers were more at ease in conversing with their intellectual ancestors than with their fellow-citizens. It was a fortunate incident of our separation from the mother-country that our men of letters naturally went not only to the English tradition but to Continental literatures with more freedom and directness; had Longfellow and Emerson been born in England it is unlikely that the one would have stamped his art so broadly with the Continent or the other have so Orientalized the surface of his thought. Intimate as was the English inheritance, it is, nevertheless, true that the conscious impact of the past on our literary men was largely through immediate contact with the other literatures of Europe as they had been molded by the Renaissance, the Gothic revival, and the Romantic revolt; our direct obligation to Greek and Latin was slight and is negligible; but we touched the broad stream of Occidental culture, in the first half of the last century, not through England only but from the Baltic to Lisbon and Shiraz.

This ancient and rich literary past was the source of our artistic tradition, and the sense of its dignity and preciousness was always great in the scholars among our writers, and nearly all of them were scholarly men. They lived habitually in it, they learned from it, they emulated its works. In other words, they had the academic mind. They were but partly naturalized even in the country in which they were born; they were sharers in the cosmo-

politanism of the modern world, and it was forced on them by the state of American culture. They were citizens of a wide world of letters; even in their patriotic endeavors they owned and obeyed another allegiance to truth and art, to the republic of letters, to the universal human spirit; and this was their natural lot because they were compelled to seek their literary inheritance in an age before American letters began to be. This was, for them, to take the academic point of view; and whether they did this from choice or under the compulsion of circumstances, the limitation thus imposed on them is often thought of as disqualifying their Americanism. In so far as they continued the literary tradition in its original shape, as if it had never been transplanted, it is said that they were not of the pure, native soil.

The academic point of view is nothing more than an ever-present sense of the hand of the past in literature — that hand which, through the whole range of the vital energies of society, is felt, perhaps, at first as compelling and restrictive, but at last as salutary and saving, for it is the racial will, abiding from the past in us, which has formed not only our bodies in stature and favor, but the habits of the soul in action. The literary power of tradition is inherited, half in our instincts and early affections, and half in our books of counsel and example; the academic mind is one that masters this tradition and is mastered by it, and has thus become a race-mind with different degrees of fullness and faculty. To know the past of artistic power, to be imbued with its moods and instructed with its great works in the human spirit, and to bring from them the true perspective that must be applied to the recent and rising world of letters, is the highway of criticism; so it has been built from the first.

Our authors in submitting themselves to this education in the literature of that civilization of which America is but a forward branch, neither injured their genius nor lessened their power. They were on the road that great poets have always followed. Who can think they would have been happier had they chosen to forget Uhland and Dante, Hafiz and Plotinus, Scott and Pope and Keats, and remember only the "Bay Psalm-Book," Edwards and Franklin, Freneau and Brown; or literature apart, to look only on the lilacs in the door-yard, and the wood-chopper, the fisherman and the itinerant Yankee, or what of nobler form — Monadnock, Washington or Decatur, Massasoit or Pontiac — there might be? They did not slight the American material in their age; rather they clung to it with unhappy tenacity; but their power to deal with it — and this is a more important because more comprehensive debt than any obligation for theme or atmosphere — they obtained from the education in the old humanities. Art is not self-made; its breeding is from far-off ages now; it is, in literature, one of the oldest possessions of the race; and the poet who thinks to sing, as the linnet sings, by the mere chipping of its egg, will have a linnet's fame. In taking possession of all the literature of their civilization that they could get, our early authors, so far from finding a limitation, found an enfranchisement. It is true, no doubt, that in this they passed beyond the native culture of their own country; they departed from what was common to the State; and, in so far, they were not Americans in the provincial sense.

They derived from their academic education the artistic point of view. This characterized them and differentiated them from their countrymen engaged in quite other occupations. The rawness of American life on the broad

scale, the vulgarity of its surface of manners and the fierceness of its money-getting exploitation of the country — greater probably than ever afflicted so large a territory — survive perceptibly only in our books of humor, but they were very real. When the most liberal allowance has been made for caricature and prejudice and a bad temper, the observations of Mrs. Trollope and Dickens, and even the coarse diatribe of Moore, are blabbing tales. The Hardcider Campaign is a landmark for the first irruption of Western roughness, like a back-water wash, upon the more staid and respectable communities of the East, where, perhaps, is then to be found the ending of old colonial reverential ways. But without drawing into memory again the things in which national oblivion delights, it is plain to any student of our social history that these men of letters lived very much protected lives, in little circles of their own, apart from the mass of their fellow-citizens. They were, as a whole, gentle-born and college-bred; they were the late fruition of a slowly matured refinement in their separate communities; and life in them had come to that perfection where the artistic point of view — the desire for moral order, sensuous beauty, and emotional harmony — was natural, and the will to find these things, to create them, effectual. The local circles in which they dwelt, and of whose members they were representative, were a small portion of the thriving and driving American world.

Artists in their work, however, they were determined to be. They were very conscious of this purpose, and they exhibit something that may be called the timidity of the scholar, a feeling of the presence of the model and of the eye of the master. This was the weak point in their academic dependence, and accounts for the plenti-

ful vein of imitativeness that belongs to all young literatures in their learning times. Some of them never really laid aside this touch of inferiority, however unreal it was in fact. In Lowell, who, perhaps more than any other, was so abundant in faculty and power that he makes the impression of a man unequal to his own genius, there is felt constantly the neighborhood of a stylist; in his odes, for example, it is the greater neighborhood of Dryden; in the later lyrics it is the smaller neighborhood of Dobson; "The Biglow Papers," on the other hand, is the notable instance of intrinsic originality, certainty, mastery; yet even there he could not get along without his prefaces. Cooper is the pupil of Scott, Irving of the essayists, and even Emerson is not without the echo of seventeenth-century short-rhymed verse, a hard, ringing coinage not easily deceiving the ear. Longfellow acquired foreign poetic manners, but he was native to their graces and wore them as his own rather than by adoption; he Americanized all that he brought home either from travel or fireside study. Poe, who drew his talent to the dregs, displayed in his art that cold calculation which was also an element in his life. Hawthorne, the purest artist of all, was least a pupil and soonest a master. All, in their different ways and degrees, worked out an artistic method by which they meant to represent, to interpret, and to unveil the human spirit. They were concerned not with the apparent, but the real; not with the transitory, but the eternal; and, excepting Poe, they were all artists of the beautiful.

They also adopted, in common, to make a third definition, the romantic point of view; and if by their cultivation of refined beauty they were set apart from the mass of their countrymen, it might be thought that they

intensified this remoteness by departing as far from American actuality as the spirit of romance could convey them. They obeyed the compulsion of the time. Romanticism ruled the literary world abroad. Travel of itself is always a main source of romance. It is the realist who must have a home-keeping mind, in order to obtain that familarity with the life he depicts which is required for truthfulness. The romancer is free of all the world; if he bides in his native village, like Thoreau, he finds Italy, Egypt, Siberia there; if he strays through the broad world, the marvel of nature, the ruin of history, the passion of life are his discoveries. Irving in the Alhambra, Longfellow by the belfry of Bruges, Taylor in the footways of Palestine are characteristic figures; to their instincts, their native deficiencies, their outgoing spirits, Europe, visible in history, was as much a realm of romance as the forest of Brocelliand to medieval knighthood; when they returned home they found romance sitting by the shores of the New World.

America was romantic from the first. I presume it is with others as with myself; classical beauty leaves me contemplative; romantic beauty incites me. The spirit of life in America is an incited spirit. In Hawthorne's American themes the encircling wilderness of Puritanism, the life of the decaying generation, the aspiration of the reformers, were romantic; so were the forest of Cooper's "Pathfinder," the Hiawatha year, and the idealizations of his country that Lowell shaped in the "Washers of the Shroud" and elsewhere. In atmosphere, faith, and passion alike, romance has been our genius; it continued so in Bret Harte's picturesqueness and Joaquin Miller's arid sublimity. The romantic spirit in our authors was fed, too, not only from contemporary litera-

ture — the European wave of the time — but from its fountain-heads. These men went to the great works of the race. They translated Homer, Dante, and Faust; Longfellow gathered the spoils of the saga and ballad, and Lowell grew familiar with trouvère and troubadour. In the most vivid autobiographical word he ever wrote, he said of this experience:

> "I was the first who ever burst
> Into that silent sea."

Emerson appropriated, as best he could, Persian image and atmosphere through Von Hammer. History sympathized with them in Prescott and Motley. To these must be added the infusion of German philosophy in the transcendentalists, with Hedge as their center of learning, not without satellites, and the re-birth of old English and the ballads which Child accomplished. It is simple truth to say that the literatures of the world were never better known, more intelligently, more variously, more richly, than in Cambridge at that time. But if our authors, by their foreign contact and artistic sense, departed from the body of the people, on this side of romantic prepossession they found reunion with the national spirit; the planting of the colonies, the Revolution, and the war for the Union were romantic causes; the freeing of the negroes and the experiments of socialistic reorganization, that everywhere in one or another form dotted the land, were romantic dreams. If there was any solvent that could have fused these men with their country, it was romantic art; here they were at one with the people, as in their culture and their artistic ripening they were in advance of the common life.

Such are some of the causes of the lack of cor-

respondence between our earlier literature and American life, in its sectional and foreign aspects and in its artistic quality. The aloofness that their work takes on, when viewed in relation to the whole country, either in its own period or now, is very tangibly felt, and it increases in proportion as the work rises in the scale of art, thought, and culture, in Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Lowell, Irving. In the case of these men the habitancy of their minds was in the past of literature, the abstract moral or esthetic sphere, the glamour of foreign horizons; they knew America as a part, but not the whole, of life; they were all sons of an older civilization, keenly conscious of an earlier home, and even in their late age still planters of the mind in a new world. In consequence of this, they appealed broadly, at best, to but one strain of the founding blood.

It is not surprising, under such circumstances, that they should rapidly grow old-fashioned. They are, in fact, farther off from our growing youth than would readily be conceived; they are less near than their English contemporaries, for example. The tradition which they accepted and emulated was necessarily in them a second-hand affair, and not only were they, to this extent, belated Goldsmiths, Scotts, Keatses, Drydens, and Dantes, but their Americanism itself, in so far as they consciously sought it in topic, was a matter of the now remote past, of the colonies, the Indians, the border, of things and conditions whose picture and sentiment are now historical; and, in the graver and the esthetic sphere, the transcendentalism of Emerson, the sentimentality of Poe, the balladry of Longfellow — who lived in the age of Uhland — the classicism of Lowell, the rusticity of Whittier, the boarding-house of the Autocrat, are far-off things. The

speed with which these authors, in the mass of their work, retire into quiescence while their acceptance becomes conventional, is not an illusion; the change goes on apace. Their reputations gained enormously by the fewness of the band. If one swallow does not make a summer, yet he is listened to more than many swallows. If these authors were not our own, and if they were not, furthermore, all our own, would there be so many books written about them, I wonder? To me they still seem a troop of pilgrims, taking up their singing march in our springtide and morntide, but much apart in their May-making, psalm-singing, and story-telling; they recede more and more from life. There is something pathetic in their artistic loneliness in their own time, something more pathetic in their fading away in ours; for their age is gone, as truly as Saadi's and Walter von der Vogelweid's.

The absorption of our literature by the people, nevertheless, has been remarkable, in proportion to its intrinsic worth. Epic and drama, the two greatest literary forms, have been absent from it; so, too, has love-passion, while satire and elegy have been slightly represented. In prose, the range of character has been narrow, the element of plot inconspicuous, and the most consistent and varied success has been achieved in the short story, sketch, and tale. The themes have been domestic life, religious feeling, public causes — in which are to be included all pieces of a patriotic motive — and that phase of history which may be described as the legend of our origin in all parts of the country. The nearness of these topics to the people governs its appropriation of the work, in varying degrees; and the simple spontaneous direct style of the writing, which is also the people's style, is a controlling factor in getting acceptance for the work. In the style is to be

found the most characteristic national trait; the themes of the affections and of religion belong to universal human life; local color, historic substance, and the passion of loyalty to our ideas and institutions are national elements.

Our literature, so absorbed, has been effectual within the natural limits of its appeal. Its path in the land has been identical with the path of the power of civilization and the mastering national force; it has been less accepted in the South, which is antipathetic to the national spirit and genius, and it is less readily received by the foreign elements in the population, though large portions of these have been prepared for sympathy and understanding in regard to it by being imbued with Revolutionary hope. In spite of all deductions, it has done its work as a leaven and power in the nation, and will long continue to operate in a diminishing degree. The extent to which Emerson, for example, who was the most purely American of all, has entered into national life by sustaining independence, self-reliance, and perfect courage in freedom of opinion, which most constitute the American way of behavior, is incalculable, while, at the same time, he has nourished ideality of aim and the conviction of a divine meaning in the world which are also broadly characteristic of the free American temper. The power of our literature falls within the limits of the idea of democracy, but that idea it has companioned through the century; it has remained close to the common life, the common religion, the fortunes of the common people in the State, and has thrown over the State historical romance and inspirited it with ideal purpose for humane ends. Our past is contained in it.

In the historical field, where the American material and color of our romance are most plain, the past, of necessity,

either perishes or is preserved for the people in the forms of imagination furnished by its writers, and these forms as now fixed are not likely to be changed or much modified by later authors who may recur to the subject. Colonial, Indian, and the border life have become largely literary, and are seen through literature, rather than actual, seen through history; the record, it is true, is accessible to the scholar, but for the people imagination serves, as it is in Hiawatha, Arthur Dimmesdale, Leatherstocking, and Roaring Camp. The Dutchman, the Puritan, and the pioneer have found imperfect types, an incomplete, and largely legendary interpretation, but such it is.

In the ethical field a similar prominence belongs to those ideas of democracy which have been most influential in working out the political and moral faith of the nation and which appear in the poetry of Lowell, Emerson, and Whittier especially. If the nation be regarded in its diversity and extent, it may be questioned whether the welcome given to these ideas, great as it is, has been so widespread as to entitle it to be called national; but if the nation be regarded in its unity and core of life, and in its historic efficiency, a different answer may be given, for this welcome has come from the ruling and dominant class, from that part of the people which has led in making history and spreading institutions on those same principles which gave the nation birth. It seems unlikely that this intense and elevated strain, which belongs characteristically to New England poets, appeals in the way literature ought to appeal — that is, sympathetically and spontaneously — to many Americans not of the original stock of the North, except the English emigrants of this century, and their children, who were of a similar breed. The number of such descendants of the first colonists is many

millions, and they belt the North across the Continent; but they are only a portion of the whole people. Certainly the readers, who find their own unconscious being expressed in the ideas of these poets, are fewer than those who absorb without difficulty the literary interpretation of our history.

In connection with this, it is necessary to take account of the vast accretions of our population from foreign lands, of a different ancestry and language from the race which founded the nation and established the genius of the English language and of English institutions as the original spring and the necessary fountain of its continuing life, at least for our own ages. Citizens of German extraction, for example, depend, even in the second generation to some degree, upon their own native books, on Goethe and Schiller, and their many minor compatriots, for the sentiment and ideas that flow from literature. Such books have no life in the soil except to supply the mold of the spirit for those who have not been made completely English in language and American in temperament; no foreign book of literary rank has been produced here from such sources. Whether the assimilation of American ideas goes on in the younger generations with anything like the same certainty and penetration as the appropriation of American history and institutional life, may well be considered a doubtful matter. The truth is — and here is one reason for the apparent disproportion between our literary energy and our other vital powers — that the function of literature is only partly discharged by our native writers. The situation is not unlike that spoken of as existing in the Puritan colony, where the Bible took the place of all other literature as an instrument of self-expression for the soul that used it in both

the intellectual and the emotional or moral life. Not only have our foreign strains a special literature, adapted to their habits and temperaments, and also dear to their affections, which lingers on, but the great English-sprung mass of the people have the literature of England, which makes a racial appeal to them, and is of permanent interest. Dickens and Thackeray, Tennyson and Browning, to speak of the last age, and Scott, Wordsworth, and Burns in the preceding time, not to mention such perennial powers as Shakespeare and Milton, discharge the function of literature for us far more effectually, with greater vividness and diversity than our own writers can accomplish. What the Bible was to the Puritans — the Book of Life — that English literature is to us still; and to it all American writing is essentially supplementary. The place of literature in our national life, as a great function of expression, is not measured either by our own production or our appreciation of it; but spreads deeply and diversely in the uses made of the historic literatures of the world, primary among which for us are the Hebrew and the English.

The absorption of our literature by nations abroad also offers some indications of its native characteristics. France, from which we have received least in formative power, has derived most from us. Cooper fell in with the taste for romantic naturalism there in his day, and Poe appealed to something racial in the Gallic spirit by virtue of which he found not only acceptance, but imitation; Hawthorne also, though to a far less degree, was made welcome. In Germany there was much the same fortune for Cooper — there seems to be a special affinity in the German race for the forest — and their own romantic schools had prepared the way for Poe and Hawthorne,

while they added Longfellow to the favored number. The countries to the north and south show no special trait in their receptivity, and in general our authors entered the Continent, as they did England, through their power in the universal human spirit rather than by local qualities in their work.

In England, nevertheless, these last counted in a peculiar way; it was natural that our authors should desire to appear to the manner born and without provincial traits; but, on the other hand, it was also natural that Englishmen should desire to see in their trans-Atlantic kin something, whatever it might be, that constituted native and peculiar character. Our authors sought to conform to the common type of English genius; Englishmen, on the contrary, sought the variation. English judgment frequently persisted in identifying the American genius by its exceptional instances; and in Bret Harte and Joaquin Miller, and especially in Mark Twain and the humorists generally, and in Walt Whitman among our poets, was found the new American type. It was felt that our polite literature, as it appeared in those half-dozen names which have shimmered all along these pages like a little string of pearls, told over and over, was not characteristic but a continuation of the old tradition, an English literature transplanted to a new soil, and there thriving in so ancestral a way as scarcely to show the change; rather in these later writers and these unfamiliar forms was the emergence of the breed of men. Native judgment has not coincided with this view.

Walt Whitman, to take the typical case, is an idealist — all live Americans are idealists — and he exemplifies in literature, in a highly developed form, that variety of the American idealist who is a believer in ideas, usually

in one idea which he seizes, and is thereupon possessed, and often transported even to living in a fanatical world. Walt Whitman was one of these. The appealing thing in him is the pure primitiveness of the ideas he seized; the arresting thing — to neglect what is merely grotesque in his work — is the boldness of outline and a certain uncramped strength with which he presented these ideas of nature, fraternity, and toil. The ideas themselves are as fundamental in the social world as are the ideas of the Declaration of Independence. In their acceptance abroad as a peculiarly American expression there was an element of preconception; such primitiveness, so loud an emphasis, such a careless defiance of conventions of art and speech, belonged to a democracy — it was as Shakespeare might have portrayed it; but to the minds which accepted Whitman, the democrat was still a cousin to Caliban. Whitman had natural poetic force without art; when he forgot his camerado rôle as the democrat vagabond under whose sombrero was all America, he wrote a few fine lyrics; but to foreigners, who find in him the nationality they miss in the old group, the result must be disappointingly small as the type and outcome of three centuries of slowly culminating English toil in a great land; and to us at home, gazing half humorously on, when we take time to think of it with a moment's passing seriousness, it seems only the caricature that deforms truth. So Doré might have drawn us, so Rabelais have humorized us; extravagance of line and laughter could go no further. To become what Whitman was, Americans, who, more than Englishmen, are the heirs of all Europe, must first denude themselves of that larger civilization with which they are integral, and be an Ishmael among nations. A poet in whom a whole nation declines to find its likeness cannot be regarded as

representative, though he may smack strongly of some raw earth in the great domain. It is more reasonable to find the national literary genius, as a fellow of universal art with its peers, in the appropriation of our best by foreign nations in those authors that are now classical with us, the group in whom we find, as a nation, our past, our ideals, and our daily life of home and heaven.

The literature which has been treated here flowered in the first half of the last century, and, except in the late Western blossom, was beyond its prime at the opening of the civil war, in 1860. The complete failure of this literature to establish an American tradition — none of its authors left any successor in the same line — indicates something parasitical in it, as if it were not self fed; a literature fed from European culture we have had, but it does not perpetuate itself in an American culture; and in the change of conditions, apparently, it is only from a new growth that literature may now be anticipated.

There is one striking sign that the elder literature has retreated into the past. While it flourished, it had influence upon that large mass of writing which may be called secondary literature, by which is meant the product that arises from the practical use of literature as a social instrument — always the larger part in any age, whether in sermon, journal, or magazine. Now the influence runs rather the other way, and journalism and its cognate forms affect the higher modes of literature by enforcing upon it something of its own conditions, standards, and uses. Not to enter in detail upon that period of dubious fame which fills the last quarter of the century, it is plain for example, that the literary treatment of history, so admirable in other historians of the older time, came to its end in Parkman, the friend and mate of the Cambridge

group in its age. The period in question has been filled with fiction, largely from French models, both realistic and romantic, with poetry in which Tennyson, Rossetti, and, among older writers, Herrick have been the prevailing foreign types, and with no significant prose other than fiction. The high average excellence of this work has, nevertheless, failed to secure for its authors the individual eminence and national welcome that belonged to the older time. The touch of literature on the public has been mainly, almost exclusively, through magazines, which have determined both its objects of interest and it molds of expression, leading to a predominance of the brief and the impressionable in kind, and of the versatile in talent. The singleness of aim characteristic of Hawthorne, Emerson, and Longfellow is not found; neither is the element of race or of academic tradition conspicuous.

From another point of view, the cleavage which is thus denoted in many ways between the old and the present, while it sets the writers of the last age apart, indicates a closer welding of the literary spirit with the nation, a more perfect union of the people and their writers. This is plain in the realistic and romantic fiction of the latest time, and here and there in some lonely strain of verse. It does not seem, however, that our writers feel the sustaining strength of national life supporting them in anything like the same degree that the old group felt the power of the local cultures of which they were the climax and expression. What our old literature lacked, after all, was power; it is this deficiency that makes it at best only a minor literature, in comparison with the literatures of the large world. The nation was not back of it; only parts and fragments of the nation. The same lack of power continues. Timidity was a characteristic of those

authors, as has been said, with but one or two exceptions; and this timidity also lasts, and is shown in the rarity of really great ambition or important tasks; we are too content to feed the presses merely. Imitativeness, too, has reached its limits; there is hardly an author of English fame, not to speak of the Continent also, from whom our men of letters, great or small, have not borrowed, sooner or later, in theme, style, and temperament, till sometimes it seems as if American literature were a whispering gallery of the Muses, and little more; in this exhaustion of the secondary method of the academic tradition, we may come back at last to our natural voices and find ourselves after the necessary period of apprenticeship in our art, as English poets, who had greatness in them, also did. To be an echo of contemporary London would be too despicable a fate. It is rather for us to return to the old group for such lessons as they can afford us in their devotion to the greatest masters of all the world, in their single-minded and high-aimed art, and in their interpretation of national ideals, and, relying on this larger and more composite people with whom we are more closely blended and fused, to endeavor to give noble expression to the common life and the lofty hope, the breadth and lift of the people, and again to bring from a democracy, enriched with all the cultures of the past and the blood of all races, the flower of art.

To sum up, then, the characteristics that have been made prominent here, our past literature is in the main sectional, a blossom from the stock of old or young communities in the East and distant West, and deeply indebted to its historic localities for theme, atmosphere, and cast of mind; it also, in its most imaginative phases, enters into the common life of the human spirit, lives in

the domain of universal art, and finds a welcome in all Occidental nations as intelligent and warm as is ever vouchsafed to literature out of its own country; and it has achieved this high distinction because of its frank use of the tradition of literature in all Western civilization. It has been controlled by the academic, artistic, and romantic spirit. For our own people it has determined for all time the memory of our historical dawn in the wilderness, its coloring and character, and has preserved the moral and political ideals of that portion of the people in whom lay the shaping will of the nation from the formation to the preservation of the Union; whatever the future may have in store, our ideal past, supplemented for a time by history, will subsist in the national consciousness as it is expressed in these authors. Much of the life of the nation in its various divisions found no record, and has perished. This literature seems, and is, inadequate; it bears no fit proportion to the greatness of the nation which swiftly outgrows it. On the other hand, it is supplemented in the life, which it so partially feeds, by world-literature, and in overwhelming measure by the English, of which we are heirs of time. In this fact of our national life — and perhaps in the practice of our authors also — may be found the foreshadowing of a time when the effectual literature of the race shall be in a larger measure a world-literature. Special cultures arise — Judea, Athens, Rome, Italian, English, French, German — and mingle with currents from above and under, and with crossing circles in the present; and the best that man has found in any quarter, nationalized in many peoples, takes the race and shapes it to itself after its own image, and especially with power in those who live the soul's life, till the world shall be knit into one; such a

providence seems to reside in history. That is a far hope — the Christian dream. But now in our own time, and this halt of our literary genius, it is plain that our nobler literature, with its little Western after-glow, belonged to an heredity and environment and a spirit of local culture whose place, in the East, was before the great passion of the Civil War, and, in the West, has also passed away. It all lies a generation, and more, behind us. The field is open, and calls loudly for new champions.

AMERICAN LITERATURE

AN ENCYCLOPEDIC VIEW

AN ENCYCLOPEDIC VIEW[1]

BEGINNINGS

THE earliest books which are commonly described as the beginnings of American literature were written by men born and bred in England; they were published there; they were, in fact, an undivided part of English literature, belonging to the province of exploration and geographical description and entirely similar in matter and style to other works of voyagers and colonizers that illustrate the expansion of England. They contain the materials of history in a form of good Elizabethan narrative, always vigorous in language, often vivid and picturesque. John Smith (1579–1631) wrote the first of these, "A True Relation of such Occurrences and Accidents of Note as hath happened in Virginia" (1608), and he later added other accounts of the country to the north. William Strachey, a Virginian official of whom little is known biographically, described (1610) the shipwreck of Sir Thomas Gates on the Bermudas, which is believed to have yielded Shakespeare suggestions for "The Tempest." Colonel Henry Norwood (d. 1689), hitherto unidentified, of Leckhampton, Gloucestershire, a person eminent for loyalty in the reign of Charles I. and distinguished in the

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civil wars, later governor of Tangiers and a member of Parliament for Gloucester, wrote an account of his voyage to Virginia as an adventurer, in 1649. These are characteristic works of the earliest period, and illustrate variously the literature of exploration which exists in numerous examples and is preserved for historical reasons. The settlement of the colonies was, in general, attended by such narratives of adventure or by accounts of the state of the country or by documentary record of events. Thus George Alsop (b. 1638) wrote the "Character of the Province of Maryland" (1666), and Daniel Denton a "Brief Description of New York" (1670), and in Virginia the progress of affairs was dealt with by William Stith (1689–1755), Robert Beverly (f. 1700), and William Byrd (1674–1744). Each settlement in turn, as it came into prominence or provoked curiosity, found its geographer and annalist, and here and there sporadic pens essayed some practical topic. The product, however, is now an indistinguishable mass, and titles and authors alike are found only in antiquarian lore. The distribution of literary activity was very uneven along the seaboard; it was naturally greatest in the more thriving and important colonies, and bore some relation to their commercial prosperity and political activity and to the closeness of the connection with the home culture of England. From the beginning New England, owing to the character of its people and its ecclesiastical rule, was the chief seat of the early literature, and held a position apart from the other colonies as a community characterized by an intellectual life. There the first printing press was set up, the first college founded, and an abundant literature was produced.

The characteristic fact in the Puritan colonies is that

literature there was in the hands of its leading citizens and was a chief concern in their minds. There were books of exploration and description as in the other colonies, such as William Wood's (d. 1639) "New England's Prospect" (1634), and John Josselin's "New England's Rarities" (1672), and tales of adventure in the wilderness and on the sea, most commonly described as "remarkable providences," in the vigorous Elizabethan narrative; but besides all this the magistracy and the clergy normally set themselves to the labor of history, controversy and counsel, and especially to the care of religion. The governors, beginning with William Bradford (1590–1657) of Plymouth, and John Winthrop (1588–1649) of Massachusetts Bay, wrote the annals of their times, and the line of historians was continued by Winslow, Nathaniel Morton, Prince, Hubbard and Hutchinson. The clergy, headed by John Cotton (1585–1652), Thomas Hooker (1586?–1647), Nathaniel Ward (1579?–1652), Roger Williams (1600–1683), Richard Mather (1596–1669), John Eliot (1604–1690), produced sermons, platforms, catechisms, theological dissertations, tracts of all sorts, and their line also was continued by Shepard, Norton, Wise, the later Mathers and scores of other ministers, The older clergy were not inferior in power of learning to the leaders of their own communion in England, and they commanded the same prose that characterizes the Puritan tracts of the mother country; nor did the kind of writing deteriorate in their successors. This body of divines in successive generations gave to early New England literature its overwhelming ecclesiastical character; it was in the main a church literature, and its secular books also were controlled and colored by the Puritan spirit. The pervasiveness of religion is well illustrated by the three books

which formed through the entire colonial period the most domestic reading of the Puritan home. These were "The Bay Psalm Book" (1640), which was the first book published in America; Michael Wigglesworth's (1631–1705) "Day of Doom" (1662), a doggerel poem; and the "New England Primer" (c. 1690), called "the Little Bible." The sole voice heard in opposition was Thomas Morton's satirical "New England Canaan" (1637), whose author was sent out of the colony for the scandal of Merrymount, but satire itself remained religious in Ward's "Simple Cobbler of Agawam" (1647). Poetry was represented in Anne Bradstreet's (1612–1672) "The Tenth Muse lately Sprung Up in America" (1650), and was continued by a succession of doggerel writers, mostly ministers or schoolmasters, Noyes, Oakes, Folger, Tompson, Byles and others. The world of books also included a good proportion of Indian war narratives and treatises relating to the aborigines. The close of the 17th century shows literature, however, still unchanged in its main position as the special concern of the leaders of the state. It is Chief-Justice Samuel Sewall's (1652–1730) "Diary" (which remained in manuscript until 1878) that affords the intimate view of the culture and habits of the community; and he was known to his contemporaries by several publications, one of which, "The Selling of Joseph" (1700), was the first American anti-slavery tract.

PURITANISM

The literature of the first century, exemplified by these few titles, is considerable in bulk, and like colonial literature elsewhere is preserved for historical reasons. In general, it records the political progress and social con-

ditions of the Puritan state, and the contents of the Puritan mind. The development of the original settlement took place without any violent check. Though the colony was continually recruited by fresh immigration, the original 20,000 who arrived before 1640 had established the principles of the state, and their will and ideas remained dominant after the Restoration as before. It was a theocratic state controlled by the clergy, and yet containing the principle of liberty. The second and third generations born on the soil, nevertheless, showed some decadence; notwithstanding the effort to provide against intellectual isolation and mental poverty by the foundation of Harvard College, they felt the effects of their situation across the sea and on the borders of a wilderness. The people were a hard-faring folk and engaged in a material struggle to establish the plantations and develop commerce on the sea; their other life was in religion soberly practised and intensely felt. They were a people of one book, in the true sense, — the Bible; it was the organ of their mental life as well as of their spiritual feelings. For them, it was in the place of the higher literature. But long resident there in the strip between the sea and the forest, cut off from the world and consigned to hard labor and to spiritual ardors, they developed a fanatical temper; their religious life hardened and darkened; intolerance and superstition grew. Time, nevertheless, ripened new changes, and the colony was to be brought back from its religious seclusion into the normal paths of modern development. The sign was contained, perhaps, most clearly in the change effected in the new charter granted by King William which made property the basis of the franchise in place of church-membership, and thus set the state upon an economic

instead of a religious foundation. It is rather by men than by books that these times are remembered, but it is by the men who were writers of books. In general, the career of the three Mathers coincides with the history of the older Puritanism, and their personal characteristics reflect its stages as their writings contain its successive traits. Richard Mather, the emigrant, had been joint author in the composition of "The Bay Psalm Book," and served the colony among the first of its leaders. It was in his son, Increase Mather (1639–1723), that the theocracy, properly speaking, culminated. He was not only a divine, president of Harvard College and a prolific writer; but he was dominant in the state, the chief man of affairs. It was he who, sent to represent the colony in England, received from King William the new charter. His son, Cotton Mather (1663–1728), succeeded to his father's distinction; but the changed condition is reflected in his non-participation in affairs; he was a man of the study and led there a narrower life than his father's had been. He was, nevertheless, the most broadly characteristic figure of the Puritan of his time. He was able and learned, abnormally laborious, leaving over 400 titles attributed to him; and at the same time he was an ascetic and visionary. The work by which he is best remembered, the "Magnalia Christi Americana, or the Ecclesiastical History of New England from its First Planting in the Year 1620, unto the Year of our Lord 1698" (1702), is the chief historical monument of the period, and the most considerable literary work done in America up to that time. It is encyclopedic in scope, and contains an immense accumulation of materials relating to life and events in the colony. There the New England of the 17th century is displayed. His numerous other works still

further amplify the period, and taken all together his writings best illustrate the contents of Puritanism in New England. The power of the clergy was waning, but even in the political sphere it was far from extinction, and it continued under its scheme of church government to guard jealously the principles of liberty. In John Wise's (1652–1725) "Vindication of the Government of New England Churches" (1717) a precursor of the Revolution is felt. It was in another sphere, however, that Puritanism in New England was to reach its height, intellectually and spiritually alike, in the brilliant personality of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), its last great product. He was free of affairs, and lived essentially the private life of a thinker. He displayed in youth extraordinary precocity and varied intellectual curiosity, and showed at the same early time a temperament of spiritual sensitiveness and religious ideality which suggests the youth of a poet rather than of a logician. It was not without a struggle that he embraced sincerely the Calvinistic scheme of divine rule, but he was able to reconcile the doctrine in its most fearful forms with the serenity and warmth of his own spirit; for his soul at all times seems as lucid as his mind, and his affections were singularly tender and refined. He served as minister to the church at Northampton; and, driven from that post, he was for eight years a missionary to the Indians at Stockbridge; finally he was made President of Princeton College, where after a few weeks incumbency he died. The works upon which his fame is founded are "Treatise concerning the Religious Affections" (1746), "On the Freedom of the Will" (1754), "Treatise on Original Sin" (1758). They exhibit extraordinary reasoning powers and place him among the most eminent theologians. He

contributed by his preaching great inspiring force to the revival, known as "the Great Awakening," which swept over the dry and formal Puritanism of the age and was its last great flame. In him New England idealism had come to birth. He illustrates better than all others, the power of Puritanism as a spiritual force; and in him only did the power reach intellectual expression in a memorable way for the larger world. The ecclesiastical literature of Puritanism, abundant as it was, produced no other work of power; nor did the Puritan patronage of literature prove fruitful in other fields. If Puritanism was thus infertile, it nevertheless prepared the soil. It impressed upon New England the stamp of the mind; the entire community was by its means intellectually as well as morally bred; and to its training and the predisposition it established in the genius of the people may be ascribed the respect for the book which has always characterized that section, the serious temper and elevation of its later literature and the spiritual quality of the imagination which is so marked a quality of its authors.

FRANKLIN

The secularization of life in New England, which went on concurrently with the decline of the clergy in social power, was incidental to colonial growth. The practical force of the people had always been strong; material prosperity increased and a powerful class of merchants grew up; public questions multiplied in variety and gained in importance. The affairs of the world had definitely obtained the upper hand. The new spirit found its representative in the great figure of Benjamin Franklin

(1706–1790), who, born in Boston, early emigrated to Philadelphia, an act which in itself may be thought to forecast the transfer of the center of interest to the west and south and specifically to that city where the congress was to sit. Franklin was a printer, and the books he circulated are an index to the uses of reading in his generation. Practical works, such as almanacs, were plentiful, and it is characteristic that Franklin's name is, in literature, first associated with "Poor Richard's Almanack" (1732). The literature of the 18th century outside of New England continued to be constituted of works of exploration, description, colonial affairs, with some sprinkling of crude science and doctrines of wealth; but it yields no distinguished names or remembered titles. Franklin's character subsumes the spirit of it. In him thrift and benevolence were main constituents; scientific curiosity of a useful sort and invention distinguished him; after he had secured a competence, public interests filled his mature years. In him was the focus of the federating impulses of the time, and as the representative of the colonies in England and during the Revolution in France, he was in his proper place as the greatest citizen of his country. He was, first of men, broadly interested in all the colonies, and in his mind the future began to be comprehended in its true perspective and scale; and for these reasons to him properly belongs the title of "the First American." The type of his character set forth in the "Autobiography" (1817) was profoundly American and prophetic of the plain people's ideal of success in a democracy. It is by his character and career rather than by his works or even his public services that he is remembered; he is a type of the citizen-man. Older than his companions, and

plain while they were of an aristocratic stamp, he greatens over them in the popular mind as age greatens over youth; but it was these companions who were to lay the foundations of the political literature of America. With the increasing political life lawyers as a class had naturally come into prominence as spokesmen and debaters. A young generation of orators sprang up, of whom James Otis (1725–1783) in the North, and Patrick Henry (1736–1799) in the South, were the most brilliant; and a group of statesmen, of whom the most notable were Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), James Madison (1751–1836), and Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804), held the political direction of the times; in the speeches and state-papers of these orators and statesmen and their fellows the political literature of the colonies came to hold the first place. The chief memorials of this literature are "The Declaration of Independence" (1776), "The Federalist" (1788), a treatise on the principles of free government, and Washington's "Addresses" (1789–1793–1796). Thus politics became, in succession to exploration and religion, the most important literary element in the latter half of the 18th century.

18TH CENTURY POETRY AND FICTION

The most refined forms of literature also began to receive intelligent attention towards the close of the period. The Revolution in passing struck out some sparks of balladry and song, but the inspiration of the spirit of nationality was first felt in poetry by Philip Freneau (1752–1832), whose "Poems" (1786) marked the best poetical achievement up to his time. Patriotism was also a ruling motive in the works of the three poets associated with

Yale College, John Trumbull (1750–1831), Timothy Dwight (1752–1817) and Joel Barlow (1754–1812), authors respectively of "McFingal" (1782), a Hudibrastic satire of the Revolution, "The Conquest of Canaan" (1785), an epic, and "The Vision of Columbus" (1787), later remade into "The Columbiad," also an epic. These poets gathered about them a less talented company, and all were denominated in common the "Hartford Wits," by which name rather than by their works they are remembered. The national hymn, "Hail Columbia," was composed by Joseph Hopkinson (1770–1842) in 1798. Fiction, in turn, was first cultivated by Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810), a Philadelphian, who wrote six romantic novels (1798–1801) after the style of Godwin, but set in the conditions of the new world and mixing local description and observation with the material of mystery and terror. Fiction had been earlier attempted by Mrs. Susanna Haswell Rowson, whose "Charlotte Temple" (1790) is remembered, and contemporaneously by Mrs. Hannah Webster Foster in "The Coquette" (1797) and by Royall Tyler (1758–1826) in "The Algerian Captive" (1799); but to Brown properly belongs the title of the first American novelist, nor are his works without invention and intensity and a certain distinction that secure for them permanent remembrance. The drama formally began its career on a regular stage and with an established company, in 1786 at New York, with the acting of Royall Tyler's comedy "The Contrast"; but the earliest American play was Thomas Godfrey's (1736–1763) tragedy, "The Prince of Parthia," acted in Philadelphia in 1667. William Dunlap (1766–1839) is, however, credited with being the father of the American theater on the New York stage, where his plays were

produced. One other earlier book deserves mention, John Woolman's (1720–1772) "Journal" (1775), an autobiography with much charm. With these various attempts the 18th century was brought to an end. In 200 years no literary classic had been produced in America.

THE NEW NATION

The new nation, which with the 19th century began its integral career, still retained the great disparities which originally existed between the diverse colonies. Political unity, the simplest of the social unities, had been achieved; "a more perfect union," in the language of the founders, had been formed; but even in the political sphere the new state bore in its bosom disuniting forces which again and again threatened to rive it apart until they were dissipated in the Civil War; and in the other spheres of its existence, intellectually, morally, socially, its unity was far from being accomplished. The expansion of its territory over the continental area brought new local diversity and prolonged the contrasts of border conditions with those of the long-settled communities. This state of affairs was reflected in the capital fact that there was no metropolitan center in which the tradition and forces of the nation were concentrated. Washington was a center of political administration; but that was all. The nation grew slowly, indeed, into consciousness of its own existence; but it was without united history, without national traditions of civilization and culture, and it was committed to the untried idea of democracy. It was founded in a new faith; yet at the moment that it proclaimed the equality of men, its own social structure

and habit North and South contradicted the declaration, not merely by the fact of slavery, but by the life of its classes. The South long remained oligarchic; in the North aristocracy slowly melted away. The coincidence of an economic opportunity with a philosophic principle is the secret of the career of American democracy in its first century. The vast resources of an undeveloped country gave this opportunity to the individual, while the nation was pledged by its fundamental idea to material prosperity for the masses, popular education and the common welfare, as the supreme test of government. In this labor, subduing the new world to agriculture, trade and manufactures, the forces of the nation were spent, under the complication of maintaining the will of the people as the directing power; the subjugation of the soil and experience in popular government are the main facts of American history. In the course of this task the practice of the fine arts was hardly more than an incident. When anyone thinks of Greece, he thinks first of her arts; when anyone thinks of America, he thinks of her arts last. Literature, in the sense of the printed word, has had a great career in America; as the vehicle of use, books, journals, literary communication, educational works and libraries have filled the land; nowhere has the power of the printed word ever been so great, nowhere has the man of literary genius ever had so broad an opportunity to affect the minds of men contemporaneously. But, in the artistic sense, literature, at most, has been locally illustrated by a few eminent names.

The most obvious fact with regard to this literature is that — to adopt a convenient word — it has been regional. It has flourished in parts of the country, very distinctly marked, and is in each case affected by its

environment and local culture; if it incorporates national elements at times, it seems to graft them on its own stock. The growth of literature in these favored soils was slow and humble. There was no outburst of genius, no sudden movement, no renaissance; but very gradually a step was taken in advance of the last generation, as that had advanced upon its forefathers. The first books of true excellence were experiments; they seem almost accidents. The cities of Boston, New York and Philadelphia were lettered communities; they possessed imported books, professional classes, men of education and taste. The tradition of literature was strong, especially in New England; there were readers used to the polite letters of the past. It was, however, in the main the past of Puritanism, both in England and at home, and of the 18th century in general, on which they were bred, with a touch ever growing stronger of the new European romanticism. All the philosophic ideas of the 18th century were current. What was most lacking was a standard self-applied by original writers; and in the absence of a great national center of standards and traditions, and amid the poverty of such small local centers as the writers were bred in, they sought what they desired, not in England, not in any one country nor in any one literature, but in the solidarity of literature itself, in the republic of letters, the world-state itself, — the master-works of all European lands; they became either pilgrims on foreign soil or pilgrims of the mind in fireside travels. The foreign influences that thus entered into American literature are obvious and make a large part of its history; but the fact here brought out is that European literature and experience stood to American writers in lieu of a national center; it was there that both standard and tradition were found.

EARLY 19TH CENTURY CLASSICS

American literature first began to exist for the larger world in the persons of Washington Irving (1785–1859) and James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851). Their recognition was almost contemporaneous. "The Sketch Book" (1819) was the first American book to win reputation in England, and "The Spy" (1821) was the first to obtain a similar vogue on the Continent. The fame of both authors is associated with New York, and that city took first place as the center of the literature of the period. It was not that New York was more intellectual than other parts of the country; but it was a highly prosperous community, where a mercantile society flourished and consequently a certain degree of culture obtained. The first American literature was not the product of a raw democracy nor of the new nationality in any sense; there was nothing sudden or vehement in its generation; but, as always, it was the product of older elements in the society where it arose and flourished under the conditions of precedent culture. The family of Irving were in trade. Cooper's father was in the law. A third writer, William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878), is associated with them, and though he announced his poetic talent precociously by "Thanatopsis" (1807), his "Poems" (1832), immediately republished in London, were the basis of his true fame. Born in Massachusetts, he lived his long life in New York, and was there a distinguished citizen. His father was a physician. All three men were not supremely endowed; they do not show the passion of genius for its work which marks the great writers; they were, like most American writers, men with the literary temperament, characteristically gentlemen, who essayed literature with

varying power. If the quality of this early literature is to be appreciated truly, the fact of its provenance from a society whose cultivation was simple and normal, a provincial bourgeois society of a prosperous democracy, must be borne in mind. It came, not from the people, but from the best classes developed under preceding conditions

IRVING

Irving all his life was in the eyes of his countrymen, whatever their pride might be in him, more a traveled gentlemen than one of themselves. He had come home to end his days at Sunnyside by the Hudson, but he had won fame in foreign fields. In his youth the beginnings of his literary work were most humble — light contributions to the press. He was of a most social nature, warm, refined, humorous, a man belonging to the town. He was not seriously disposed, idled much, and surprised his fellow-citizens suddenly by a grotesque "History of New York" (1809), an extravaganza satirizing the Dutch element of the province. He discovered in writing this work his talent for humor and also one part of his literary theme, the Dutch tradition; but he did not so convince himself of his powers as to continue, and it was only after the failure of his commercial interests that, being thrown on himself for support, he published in London ten years later, at the age of thirty-six, the volume of sketches which by its success committed him to a literary career. In that work he found himself; sentiment and distinction of style characterized it, and these were his main traits. He remained abroad, always favored in society and living in diplomatic posts in Spain and England, for seventeen

years, and he later spent four years in Spain as Minister. Spain gave him a larger opportunity than England for the cultivation of romantic sentiment, and he found there his best themes in Moorish legend and history. On his return to America he added to his subjects the exploration of the West; and he wrote, besides, biographies of Goldsmith and Washington. He was, as it turned out, a voluminous writer; yet his books successively seem the accident of his situation. The excellence of his work lies rather in the treatment than the substance; primarily, there is the pellucid style, which he drew from his love of Goldsmith, and the charm of his personality shown in his romantic interest, his pathos and humor ever growing in delicacy, and his famliar touch with humanity. He made his name American mainly by creating the legend of the Hudson, and he alone has linked his memory locally with his country so that it hangs over the landscape and blends with it forever; he owned his nativity, too, by his pictures of the prairie and the fur-trade and by his life of Washington, who had laid his hand upon his head; but he had spent half his life abroad, in the temperamental enjoyment of the romantic suggestion of the old world, and by his writings he gave this expansion of sympathy and sentiment to his countrymen. If his temperament was native-born and his literary taste home-bred, and if his affections gave a legend to the countryside and his feelings expanded with the prairie and wilderness, and if he sought to honor with his pen the historic associations and memory of the land which had honored him, it was, nevertheless, the trans-Atlantic touch that had loosed his genius and mainly fed it, and this fact was prophetic of the immediate course of American literature and the most significant in his career.

COOPER

Cooper's initiation into literature was similar to that of Irving. He had received, perhaps, something more of scanty formal education, since he attended Yale College for a season, but he early took to the sea and was a midshipman. He was thirty years old before he began to write, and it was almost an accident that after the failure of his first novel he finished "The Spy," so deterring was the prejudice that no American book could succeed. He was, however, a man of great energy of life, great force of will; it was his nature to persist. The way once opened, he wrote voluminously and with great unevenness. His literary defects, both of surface and construction, are patent. It was not by style nor by any detail of plot or character that he excelled; but whatever imperfections there might be, his work was alive; it had body, motion, fire. He chose his subjects from aspects of life familiar to him in the fields of the Revolution. He thus established a vital connection with his own country, and in so far he is the most national by his themes of any of the American writers. What he gave was the scene of the new world, both in the forest and by the fires of the Revolution and on the swift and daring American ships; but it was especially by his power to give the sense of the primitive wilderness and the ocean weather, and adventure there, that he won success. In France, where he was popular, this came as an echo out of the real world of the west to the dream of nature that had lately grown up in French literature; and, besides, of all the springs of interest native to men in every land adventure in the wild is, perhaps, the easiest to touch, the quickest and most inflaming to respond. Cooper stood for a true

element in American experience and conditions, for the romance in the mere presence of primeval things of nature newly found by man and opening to his coming; this was an imaginative moment, and Cooper seized it by his imagination. He especially did so in the Indian elements of his tale, and gave permanent ideality to the Indian type. The trait of loftiness which he thus incorporated belongs with the impression of the virgin forest and prairie, the breadth, the silence, and the music of universal nature. The distinction of his work is to open so great a scene worthily, to give it human dignity in rough and primitive characters seen in the simplicity of their being, and to fill it with peril, resourcefulness and hardihood. It is the only brave picture of life in the broad from an American pen. Scott, in inventing the romantic treatment in fiction, was the leader of the historical novel; but Cooper, except in so far as he employed the form, was not in a true sense an imitator of Scott; he did not create, nor think, nor feel, in Scott's way, and he came far short of the deep human power of Scott's genius. He was not great in character; but he was great in adventure, manly spirit and the atmosphere of the natural world, an Odysseyan writer, who caught the moment of the American planting in vivid and characteristic traits.

BRYANT

This same spirit, but limited to nature in her most elemental forms and having the simplest generic relations to human life, characterizes Bryant. He, too, had slender academic training, and came from the same social origins as Irving and Cooper; but, owing to his extraor-

dinary boyish precocity, the family influences upon him and the kind of home he was bred in are more clearly seen. He framed his art in his boyhood on the model of 18th-century verse, and though he felt the liberalizing influences of Wordsworth later there always remained in his verse a sense of form that suggests a severer school than that of his English contemporaries. He lived the life of a journalist and public man in New York, but the poet in him was a man apart and he jealously guarded his talent in seclusion. Though he was at times abroad, he remained home-bred. He wrote a considerable quantity of verse; but it is by a quality in it rather than by its contents that his poetry is recalled, and this quality exists most highly in the few pieces that are well known. To no verse is the phrase "native wood-notes wild" more properly applied. His poetry gives this deep impression of privacy; high, clear, brief in voice, and yet, as it were, as of something hidden in the sky or grove or brook, or as if the rock spoke, it is nature in her haunts; it is the voice of the peak, the forests, the cataracts, the smile of the blue gentian, the distant rosy flight of the water-fowl, — with no human element less simple than piety, death or the secular changes of time. It is, too, an expression of something so purely American that it seems that it must be as uncomprehended by one not familiar with the scene as the beauty of Greece or Italian glows; it is poetry locked in its own land. This presence of the pure, the pristine, the virginal in the verse, this luminousness, spaciousness, serenity in the land, this immemorialness of natural things, is the body and spirit of the true wild, such as Bryant's eyes had seen it and as it had possessed his soul. In no other American poet is there this nearness to original awe in the presence of nature; nowhere is

nature so slightly humanized, so cosmically felt, and yet poetized. Poetry of this sort must be small in amount; a few hundred lines contain it all; but they alone shrine the original grandeur, not so much of the American landscape, as of the wild nature when first felt in the primitive American world.

American romanticism thus began with these three writers, who gave it characterization after all by only a few simple traits. There was in it no profound passion nor philosophy nor revolt; especially there was no morbidness. It was sprung from a new soil. The breath of the early American world was in Bryant's poetry; he had freed from the landscape a Druidical nature-worship of singular purity, simple and grand, unbound by any conventional formulas of thought or feeling but deeply spiritual. The new life of the land filled the scene of Cooper; prairie, forest and sea, Indians, backwoodsmen and sailors, the human struggle of all kinds, gave it diversity and detail; but its life was the American spirit, the epic action of a people taking primitive possession, battling with the various foes, making its world. Irving, more brooding and reminiscent, gave legend to the landscape, transformed rudeness with humor and brought elements of picturesqueness into play; and in him, in whom the new race was more mature, was first shown that nostalgia for the past, which is everywhere a romantic trait but was peculiarly strong under American conditions. He was consequently more free in imagination than the others, and first dealt with other than American subjects, emancipating literature from provinciality of theme, while the modes of his romantic treatment, the way he felt about his subjects, still owed much to his American birth. In all this literature by the three writers

there was little complexity, and there was no strangeness in their personalities. Irving was more genially human; Cooper more vitally intense; Bryant was the more careful artist in the severe limits of his art, which was simple and plain. Simplicity and plainness characterize all three; they were, in truth, simple American gentlemen, of the breeding and tastes that a plain democracy produced as its best, who, giving themselves to literature for a career, developed a native romanticism, which, however obvious and uncomplicated with philosophy, passion or moods, represented the first stage of American life with freshness of power, an element of ideal loftiness and much literary charm.

GENERAL PROGRESS

Though Irving, Cooper and Bryant were associated with New York, there was something sporadic in their generation. They have no common source; they stood apart; and their work neither overlapped nor blended, but remained self-isolated. None of them can be said to have founded a school, but Irving left a literary tradition and Cooper had followers in the field of historical fiction. The literary product up to the middle of the century presents generally from its early years the appearance of an indistinguishable mass, as in colonial days, in which neither titles nor authors are eminent. The association of American literature with the periodical press is, perhaps, the most important trait to be observed. New York and Philadelphia were book-markets, and local presses had long been at work issuing many reprints. Magazines in various degrees of importance sprang up in succession to the earlier imitations of English 18th

century periodicals, which abounded at the beginning of the century; and as time went on these were accompanied by a host of annuals of the English "Keepsake" variety. Philadelphia was especially distinguished by an early fertility in magazines, which later reached a great circulation, as in the case of "Godey's" and "Graham's"; the "Knickerbocker" became prominent in New York from 1833, when it was founded; Richmond had in "The Southern Literary Messenger" the chief patron of southern writers from 1834, and there were abortive ventures still farther south in Charleston. These various periodicals and like publications were the literary arena, the place of ambition for young and old, for known and unknown, and there literary fame and what little money came of its pursuit were found. Minor poetry flourished in it; sketches, tales, essays, every sort of writing in prose multiplied there. The 18th century was fairly left behind. The Philadelphian reprint of Galignani's Paris edition of Keats, Shelley and Coleridge had brought in the new romantic poetry with wide effect; and Disraeli, Bulwer and, later, Dickens are felt in the prose; in verse, especially by women, Mrs. Hemans and Mrs. Browning ruled the moment. The product was large. In poetry it was displayed on the most comprehensive scale in Rufus Wilmot Griswold's (1815–1857) collections of American verse, made in the middle of the century. Mrs. Lydia Sigourney (1791–1865), a prolific writer, and Mrs. Maria Gowan Brooks (1795–1845), known as Southey's "Maria del Occidente," a more ambitious aspirant, the "Davidson sisters" (1808–1825: 1823–1838), and Alice (1820–1871) and Phoebe Cary (1824–1871) illustrate the work of the women; and Richard Henry Wilde (1789–1847), George Pope Morris (1802–1864), Charles Fenno Hof-

man (1806–1884) and Willis Gaylord Clark (1810–1841) may serve for that of men. In this verse, and in the abundant prose as well, the sentimentality of the period is strongly marked; it continued to the times of the Civil War. Two poets of a better type, Joseph Rodman Drake (1795–1820), distinguished by delicacy of fancy, and Fitz-Greene Halleck (1790–1867), who showed ardor and a real power of phrase, are remembered from an earlier time for their brotherhood in verse, but Drake died young and Halleck was soon sterilized, so that the talents of both proved abortive. The characteristic figure that really exemplifies this secondary literature at its best is Nathaniel Parker Willis (1806–1867) who, though born in Portland, Maine, was the chief *littérateur* of the Knickerbocker period. He wrote abundantly in both verse and prose, and was the first of the journalist type of authors, a social adventurer with facile powers of literary entertainment, a man of the town and immensely popular. He was the sentimentalist by profession, and his work, transitory as it proved, was typical of a large share of the taste, talent and ambition of the contemporary crowd of writers. Neighboring him in time and place are the authors of various stripe, known as "the Literati," whom Poe described in his critical papers, which, in connection with Griswold's collections mentioned above, are the principal current source of information concerning the bulk of American literature in that period.

POE

This world of the magazines, the Literati and sentimentalism, was the true *milieu* of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849). Born in Boston, his mother a pleasing

English actress and his father a dissipated stage-struck youth of a Baltimore family, left an orphan in childhood, he was reared in the Virginian home of John Allan, a merchant of Scottish extraction; he received there the stamp of Southern character. He was all his life characteristically a Southerner, with Southern ideals of character and conduct, Southern manners towards both men and women and Southern passions. He showed precocity in verse, but made his real *début* in prose as editor of "The Southern Literary Messenger" at Richmond in 1835. He was by his talents committed to a literary career, and being usually without definite means of support he followed the literary market, first to Philadelphia and later to New York. He was continuously associated with magazines as editor, reviewer or contributor; they were his means of sustenance; and, whether as cause or effect, this mode of life fell in with the nature of his mind, which was a contemporary mind. He was perhaps better acquainted with contemporary work in literature than any of his associates; he took his first cues from Disraeli and Bulwer and Moore, and he was earliest to recognize Tennyson and Mrs. Browning; his principal reading was always in the magazines. He was, however, more than a man of literary temperament like Irving and Cooper; he was a child of genius. As in their case, there was something sporadic in his appearance on the scene. He had no American origins, but only American conditions of life. In fact he bore little relation to his period, and so far as he was influenced, it was for the worse; he transcended the period, essentially in all his creative work. He chose for a form of expression the sketch, tale or short story, and he developed it in various ways. From the start there was a melodramatic element

in him, itself a Southern trait and developed by the literary influence of Disraeli and Bulwer on his mind. He took the tale of mystery as his special province; and receiving it as a mystery that was to be explained, after the recent masters of it, he saw its fruitful lines of development in the fact that science had succeeded to superstition as the source of wonder, and also in the use of ratiocination as a mode of disentanglement in the detective story. Brilliant as his success was in these lines, his great power lay in the tale of psychological states as a mode of impressing the mind with the thrill of terror, the thrall of fascination, the sense of mystery. It is by his tales in these several sorts that he won, more slowly than Irving or Cooper and effectually only after his death, continental reputation; at present no American author is so securely settled in the recognition of the world at large, and he owes this, similarly to Cooper, to the power of mystery over the human mind universally; that is, he owes it to his theme, seconded by a marvelous power to develop it by the methods of art. He thus added new traits to American romanticism, but as in the case of Irving's Spanish studies there is no American element in the theme; he is detached from his local world, and works in the sphere of universal human nature, nor in his treatment is there any trace of his American birth. He is a world author more purely than any other American writer. Though it is on his tales that his continental reputation necessarily rests, his temperament is more subtly expressed in his verse, in which that *fond* of which his tales are the logical and intelligible growth gives out images and rhythms, the issue of morbid states, which affect the mind rather as a form of music than of thought. Emotion was, in art, his constant aim, though it might be only

so simple a thing as the emotion of color as in his landscape studies; and in his verse, by an unconscious integration and flow of elements within him it must be thought, he obtained emotional effects by images which have no intellectual value, and which float in rhythms so as to act musically on the mind and arouse pure moods of feeling absolutely free of any other contents. Such poems must be an enigma to most men, but others are accessible to them, and derive from them an original and unique pleasure; they belong outside of the intellectual sphere. It is by virtue of this musical quality and immediacy that his poetry is characterized by genius; in proportion as it has meaning of an intelligible sort it begins to fade and lower; so far as "Lenore" and "Annie" and "Annabel Lee" are human, they are feeble ghosts of that sentimentality which was so rife in Poe's time and so maudlin in his own personal relations; and except for a half-dozen pieces, in which his quality of rhythmical fascination is supreme, his verse as a whole is inferior to the point of being commonplace. Small as the quantity of his true verse is, it more sustains his peculiar genius in American eyes than does his prose; and this is because it is so unique. He stands absolutely alone as a poet with none like him; in his tales, as an artist, he is hardly less solitary, but he has some ties of connection or likeness with the other masters of mystery. Poe lived in poverty and died in misery; but without him romanticism in America would lose its most romantic figure, and American literature the artist who, most of all its writers, had the passion of genius for its work.

Poe left even less trace of himself in the work of others than did Irving, Cooper and Bryant. He stands in succession to them, and closed the period so far as it con-

tributed to American romanticism anything distinguisned, original or permanent. The ways already opened had, however, been trod, and most notably in fiction. The treatment of manners and customs, essentially in Irving's vein, was pleasingly cultivated in Maryland by John Pendleton Kennedy (1795–1870) in "Swallow Barn" (1832) and similar tales of Old Dominion life. In Virginia, Beverly Tucker (1784–1851) in "The Partisan Leader" (1836), noticeable for its prophecy of secession, and John Esten Cooke (1830–1886) in "The Virginia Comedians" (1854), also won a passing reputation. The champion in the South, however, was William Gilmore Simms (1806–1870), born in Charleston, a voluminous writer of both prose and verse, who undertook to depict, on the same scale as Cooper and in his manner, the settlement of the Southern territory and its Indian and revolutionary history; but of his many novels, of which the characteristic examples are "The Yemassee" (1835), "The Partisan" (1835) and "Beauchampe" (1842), none attained literary distinction. The sea-novel was developed by Herman Melville (1819–1891) in "Typee" (1846) and its successors, but these tales, in spite of their being highly commended by lovers of adventure, have taken no more hold than the work of Simms. Single novels of wide popularity appeared from time to time, of which a typical instance was "The Wide, Wide World" (1850) by Susan Warner (1819–1885). The grade of excellence was best illustrated, perhaps, for the best current fiction which was not to be incorporated in literature, by the novels of Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789–1867), of a western Massachusetts family, in "Hope Leslie" (1827) and its successors. The distinct Knickerbocker strain was best preserved by James Kirke

Paulding (1778–1860) among the direct imitators of Irving; but the better part of the Irving tradition, its sentiment, social grace and literary flavor, was not noticeable until it awoke in George William Curtis (1824–1892), born a New Englander but, like Bryant, a journalist and public man of New York, whose novels, notes of travel and casual brief social essays brought that urbane style to an end, as in Donald Grant Mitchell (1822–1908) the school of sentiment, descended from the same source, died not unbecomingly in the "Reveries of a Bachelor" (1850) and "Dream Life" (1851). Two poets, just subsequent to Poe, George Henry Boker (1823–1890) and Thomas Buchanan Read (1822–1872), won a certain distinction, the former especially in the drama, in the Philadelphia group. The single popular songs, "The Star-Spangled Banner" (1813), by Francis Scott Key (1779–1843) of Maryland, "America" (1832), by Samuel Francis Smith (1808–1895) of Massachusetts, and "Home, Sweet Home" (1823), by John Howard Payne (1792–1852) of New York, may also be appropriately recorded here. The last distinct literary personality to emerge from the miscellany of talent in the middle of the century, in the middle Atlantic states, was James Bayard Taylor (1825–1878), who, characteristically a journalist, gained reputation by his travels, poems and novels, but in spite of brilliant versatility and a high ambition failed to obtain permanent distinction. His translation of "Faust" (1870) is his chief title to remembrance; but the later cultivation of the oriental motive in American lyrical poetry owes something to his example.

NEW ENGLAND SCHOLARSHIP

In New England, which succeeded to New York as the chief source of literature of high distinction, the progress of culture in the post-Revolutionary period was as normal and gradual as elsewhere in the country; there was no violence of development, no sudden break, but the growth of knowledge and taste went slowly on in conjunction with the softening of the Puritan foundation of thought, belief and practice. What most distinguished literature in New England from that to the west and south was its connection with religion and scholarship, neither of which elements was strong in the literature that has been described. The neighborhood of Harvard College to Boston was a powerful influence in the field of knowledge and critical culture. The most significant fact in respect to scholarship, however, was the residence abroad of George Ticknor (1791–1871), author of "The History of Spanish Literature" (1849), of Edward Everett (1794–1865), the orator, and of George Bancroft (1800–1891), author of the "History of the United States" (1834–1874), who as young men brought back new ideals of learning. The social connection of Boston, not only with England but with the Continent, was more constant, varied and intimate than fell to the fortune of any other city, and owing to the serious temper of the community the intellectual commerce with the outer world through books was more profound. Coleridge was early deeply influential on the thought of the cultivated class, and to him Carlyle, who found his first sincere welcome and effectual power there, succeeded. The influence of both combined to introduce, and to secure attention for, German writers. Translation, as time went on, followed,

and German thought was also further sustained and advanced in the community by Frederick Henry Hedge (1805–1890), a philosophical theologian, who conducted a propaganda of German ideas. The activity of the group about him is significantly marked by the issue of the series of "Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature" (1838), edited by George Ripley (1802–1880), the critic, which was the first of its kind in America. French ideas, as time went on, were also current, and the field of research extended to the Orient, the writings of which were brought forward especially in connection with the Transcendental Movement to which all these foreign studies contributed. In New England, in other words, a close, serious and vital connection was made, for the first time, with the philosophic thought of the world and with its tradition even in the remote past. Unitarianism, which was the form in which the old Puritanism dissolved in the cultivated class, came in with the beginning of the century, and found its representatives in the gentle character, refined inteligence and liberal humanity of William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), who has remained its chief apostle. It was the expression of a moral maturing and intellectual enlightenment that took place with as little disturbance as ever marked religious evolution in any community. The people at large remained evangelical, but they also felt in a less degree the softening and liberalizing tendency; nevertheless it was mainly in the field of Unitarianism that literature flourished, as was natural, and Transcendentalism was a phenomenon that grew out of Unitarianism, being indeed the excess of the movement of enlightenment and the extreme limit of intuitionalism, individualism and private judgment. These two factors, religion and scholarship, gave to New England literature

its serious stamp and academic quality; but the preparatory stage being longer, it was slower to emerge than the literature of the rest of the country.

The first stirrings of romanticism in New England were felt, as in the country to the south, by men of literary temperament in a sympathetic enjoyment and feeble imitation of the contemporary English romantic school of fiction exemplified by Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis and Godwin. Washington Allston (1779–1843), the painter, born in South Carolina but by education and adoption a citizen of Cambridge, showed the taste in "Monaldi" (1841), and Richard Henry Dana (1787–1879) in "Paul Felton (1833); in his poem of the same date, "The Buccaneer," the pseudo-Byronic element, which belongs to the conception of character and passion in this school of fiction, appears. These elder writers illustrate rather the stage of imaginative culture at the period, and show by their other works also — Allston by his poems "The Sylphs of the Seasons" (1813), and Dana by his abortive periodical "The Idle Man" (1821), issued at New York — their essential sympathy with the literary conditions reigning before the time of Irving. They both were post Revolutionary, and advanced American culture in other fields rather than imagination, Allston in art and Dana in criticism, as editor of "The North American Review," which was founded in 1815, and was long the chief organ of serious thought and critical learning, influential in the dissemination of ideas and in the maintenance of the intellectual life. The influence of their personality in the community, like that of Channing, with whom they were closely connected, was of more importance than any of their works.

EMERSON: HAWTHORNE: LONGFELLOW

The definite moment of the appearance of New England in literature in the true sense was marked by Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803–1882) "Nature" (1836), Nathaniel Hawthorne's (1804–1864) "Twice-Told Tales" (1837) and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's (1807–1882) "Voices of the Night" (1839). Of this group of men Longfellow is the most national figure, and from the point of view of literary history the most significant by virtue of what he contributed to American romanticism in the large. He felt the conscious desire of the people for an American literature, and he obeyed it in the choice of his subjects. He took national themes, and his work is in this respect the counterpart in poetry to that of Cooper in prose. In "Hiawatha" (1855) he poetized the Indian life; and, though the scene and figures of the poem are no more localized than the happy hunting-grounds, the ideal of the life of the aborigines in the wilderness is given with freshness and primitive charm and with effect on the imagination. It is the sole survivor of many poetic attempts to naturalize the Indian in literature, and will remain the classic Indian poem. In "Evangeline" (1847), "The Courtship of Miles Standish" (1858) and "The New England Tragedies" (1868), he depicted colonial life. As he thus embodied tradition in one portion of his work, he rendered national character in another, and with more spontaneity, in those domestic poems of childhood and the affections, simple moods of the heart in the common lot, which most endeared him as the poet of the household. These are American poems as truly as his historical verse, though they are also universal for the English race. In another large portion of his work

he brought back from the romantic tradition of Europe, after Irving's manner, motives which he treated for their pure poetic quality, detached from anything American, and he also translated much foreign verse from the north and south of Europe, including Dante's "Divine Comedy" (1867). He has, more than any other single writer, reunited America with the poetic past of Europe, particularly in its romance. The same serenity of disposition that marked Irving and Bryant characterized his life; and his art, more varied than Bryant's or Irving's, has the same refinement, being simple and so limpid as to deceive the reader into an oblivion of its quality and sometimes into an unwitting disparagement of what seems so plain and natural as to be commonplace. In Longfellow, as in Irving, one is struck by that quietude, which is so prevailing a characteristic of American literature, and which proceeds from its steady and even flow from sources that never knew any disturbances or perturbation. The life, the art, the moods are all calm; deep passion is absent.

Hawthorne was endowed with a soul of more intense brooding, but he remained within the circle of this peace. He developed in solitude exquisite grace of language, and in other respects was an artist, the mate of Poe in the tale and exceeding Poe in significance since he used symbolism for effects of truth. He, like Longfellow, embodied the national tradition, in this case the Puritan past; but he seized the subject, not in its historical aspects and diversity of character and event, but psychologically in its moral passion in "The Scarlet Letter" (1850), and less abstractly, more picturesquely, more humanly, in its blood tradition, in "The House of the Seven Gables" (1851). In his earlier work, as an artist, he shows the paucity of the materials in the environment, especially in

his tales; but when his residence in Italy and England gave into his hands larger opportunity, he did not succeed so well in welding Italy with America in "The Marble Faun" (1860), or England with America in his experimental attempts at the work which he left uncompleted, as he had done in the Puritan romances. He had, however, added a new domain to American romanticism; and, most of all these writers, he blended moral truth with fiction; he indeed spiritualized romance, and without loss of human reality, — a rare thing in any literature. Both Longfellow and Hawthorne were happy in reconciling their art with their country: both, not less than Poe, were universal artists, but they incorporated the national past in their art and were thereby more profoundly American.

Emerson, whose work lay in the religious sphere, not unlike Jonathan Edwards at an earlier time of climax but in a different way, marked the issue of Puritanism in pure idealism, and was more contemporaneously associated with the life in the times than were the purely imaginative writers. He was the central figure of Transcendentalism, and apart from his specific teachings stood for the American spirit, disengaged from authority, independent, personal, responsible only to himself. He reached a revolutionary extreme, but he had not arrived at it by revolutionary means; without storm or stress, with characteristic peacefulness, he came to the great denials, and without much concerning himself with them turned to his own affirmations of spiritual reality, methods of life and personal results. Serenity was his peculiar trait; amid all the agitation about him he was entirely unmoved, lived calmly and wrote with placid power, concentrating into the slowly wrought sentences of his "Essays" (1841–1875) the spiritual essence and moral metal of a life lived to God, to himself and to his fellow-

men. He, more than any other single writer, reunited American thought with the philosophy of the world; more than all others, he opened the ways of liberalism, wherever they may lead. He was an emancipator of the mind. In his "Poems" (1847–1867), though the abstract and the concrete often find themselves awkward mates, his philosophic ideas are put forth under forms of imagination and his personal life is expressed with nobility; his poetic originality, though so different in kind, is as unique as Poe's, and reaches a height of imaginative faculty not elsewhere found in American verse. His poetry belongs more peculiarly to universal art, so pure in general is its philosophic content and so free from any temporal trait is the style; but it is as distinguished for the laconic expression of American ideas, minted with one blow, as his prose is for the constant breathing of the American spirit. It is the less possible to define the American traits in Emerson, because they constituted the man. He was as purely an American type as Lincoln. The grain of the man is in his work also; and the best that his prose and verse contain is his personal force. In him alone is genius felt as power; in the others it impresses one primarily as culture, modes of artistic faculty, phases of temperament. In this, too, he brings to mind Jonathan Edwards, the other climax of the religious spirit in New England; in Edwards it was intellectual power, in Emerson it was moral power; in both it was indigenous, power springing from what was most profound in the historic life of the community.

WHITTIER: HOLMES: LOWELL

Three other names, John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892), Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–1894), James

Russell Lowell (1819–1891), complete the group of the greatest writers of New England. Holmes was a more local figure, by his humour and wit and his mental acuteness a Yankee and having the flavor of race, but neither in his verse nor his novels reaching a high degree of excellence and best known by "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" (1858), which is the Yankee prose classic. His contemporary reputation was largely social and owed much to the length of his life, but his actual hold on literature already seems slight and his work of little permanent value. Whittier stands somewhat apart as the poet of the soil and also because of his Quakerism; he was first eminent as the poet of the anti-slavery movement, to which he contributed much stirring verse, and later secured a broader fame by "Snowbound" (1866) and his religious poems of simple piety, welcome to every faith; he was also a balladist of local legends. In general he is the voice of the plain people without the medium of academic culture, and his verse though of low flight is near to their life and faith. Lowell first won distinction by "The Biglow Papers" (1848), which with the second series (1866) is the Yankee classic in verse, and is second only to his patriotic odes in maintaining his poetic reputation; his other verse, variously romantic in theme and feeling, and latterly more kindred to English classic style, shows little originality and was never popularly received; it is rather the fruit of great talent working in close literary sympathy with other poets whom from time to time he valued. His prose consists in the main of literary studies in criticism, a field in which he held the first rank. Together with Holmes and Whittier he gives greater body, diversity and illustration to the literature of New England; but in the work of none of

these is there the initiative or the presence of single genius that characterize Emerson, Hawthorne and Longfellow. Lowell was a scholar with academic ties, a patriot above party, master of prose and verse highly developed and finished, and at times of a lofty strain owing to his moral enthusiasm; Whittier was a Quaker priest, vigorous in a great cause of humanity, with fluent power to express in poetry the life of the farm, the roadside and the legends that were like folklore in the memory of the settlement; Holmes was a town wit and master of occasional verse, with notes here and there of a higher strain in single rare poems.

TRANSCENDENTALISM

The secondary literature that accompanied the work of these writers was abundant. It was largely the product of Transcendentalism and much of it gathered about Emerson. In "The Dial" (1840), the organ of Transcendentalism, he introduced to the public his young friend, Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), author of "Walden" (1854) and the father of the nature-writers, who as a hermit-type has had some European vogue and shows an increasing hold as an exception among men, but whose work has little literary distinction; and together with him, his companion, William Ellery Channing (1818–1901), a poet who has significance only in the transcendentalist group. With them should be named Emerson's coeval, Amos Bronson Alcott (1799–1888), the patriarch of the so-called Concord philosophers, better esteemed for his powers of monologue than as a writer in either prose or verse. Emerson's associate-editor in "The Dial" was Sarah Margaret Fuller, afterwards

Marchioness d'Ossoli (1810–1850), a woman of extraordinary qualities and much usefulness, who is best remembered by her "Woman in the Nineteenth Century" (1844), but contributed no permanent work to literature. She was a leading figure at Brook Farm, the socialistic community founded by members of the group, and especially by Ripley, who like her afterwards emigrated to New York and together with her began a distinguished critical career in connection with "The New York Tribune." Transcendentalism produced also its peculiar poet in Jones Very (1813–1881), whose "Poems" (1839) have original quality though slight merit, and its novelist in Sylvester Judd (1813–1853), whose "Margaret" (1845) is a unique work in American fiction. Other transcendentalist poets were Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813–1892), and Charles Timothy Brooks (1813–1883), who translated "Faust" (1856), besides a score of minor names. Outside of this group Thomas William Parsons (1819–1892), who translated Dante's "Inferno" (1843), was a poet of greater distinction, but his product was slight. The prose of the movement, though abundant, yielded nothing that is remembered.

HISTORY: ORATORY: FICTION: SCHOLARSHIP

The literary life of Boston was, however, by no means confined within this circle of thought. It was most distinguished in the field of history, where indeed the writers rivalled the imaginative authors in public fame. They were, besides George Bancroft already mentioned, John Gorham Palfrey (1796–1881), author of "The History of New England" (1858), William Hickling Prescott (1796–1859), whose field was Spanish and Spanish-

American history, John Lothrop Motley (1814–1877), whose attention was given to Dutch history, and Jared Sparks (1789–1866), whose work lay in biography. In the writings of Prescott and Motley the romanticism of the period is clearly felt, and they attained the highest distinction in the literary school of history of the period. Oratory also flourished in Daniel Webster (1782–1852), Edward Everett (1794–1865), Rufus Choate (1799–1859), Wendell Phillips (1811–1884), Charles Sumner (1811–1874), and Robert Charles Winthrop (1809–1894), the last survivor of a long line of fiery or classic oratory in which New England was especially distinguished and had rivalry only from Henry Clay (1777–1852) of Virginia, and John Caldwell Calhoun (1782–1850) of South Carolina. The church also introduced two powerful speakers in Theodore Parker (1810–1860), the protagonist of the liberals in Boston, and Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887), who sustained a liberal form of New England Congregationalism in Brooklyn, New York, where he made Plymouth Church a national pulpit. The single memorable novel of the period was Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's (1811–1896) "Uncle Tom's Cabin" (1852), which had a world-wide vogue; it is the chief contribution of the anti-slavery movement to American literature and stands for plantation life in the old South. Another female writer, Mrs. Lydia Maria Child (1802–1880), remembered by her "Philothea" (1836), deserves mention in the line of notable American women who served their generation in literary ways and by devotion to public causes. Criticism was served excellently by Edwin Percy Whipple (1819–1885), and less eminently by Henry Theodore Tuckerman (1813–1871), who emigrated to New York; but scholarship in general flourished

under the protection of Harvard College, where Ticknor, Longfellow and Lowell maintained a high ideal of literary knowledge and judgment in the chair they successively filled, and were accompanied in English by Francis James Child (1825–1896), whose "English and Scottish Ballads," first issued in 1858, was brought to its final and monumental form in 1892. Cornelius Conway Felton (1807–1862), president of Harvard College, stood for Greek culture, but the classical influence was little in evidence. Elsewhere in New England George Perkins Marsh (1801–1882) of Vermont, long minister to Italy, and William Dwight Whitney (1827–1894) of Yale, were linguistic scholars of high distinction. The development of the colleges into universities was already prophesied in the presence and work of these men. Outside of New England scholarship had been illustrated in New York by Charles Anthon (1797–1867), the classical editor, by the Duyckincks, Evert Augustus (1816–1878) and George Long (1823–1863), editors of the "Cyclopaedia of American Literature" (1855), and by Giulian Crommelin Verplanck (1786–1870), editor of "Shakespeare."

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW ENGLAND LITERATURE

New England thus, standing somewhat apart, produced a characteristic literature, more deeply rooted in the community than was the case elsewhere; and this literature, blending with what was produced to the South and West, became a predominant share of what has been nationally accepted as standard American literature. It is also the more profound and scholarly share; and if quantity as well as quality be counted, and, as is proper, Bryant be included as the product of Puritan culture, it

is the more artistic share. American standard literature, so constituted, belongs to romanticism, and is a phase of the romanticism which was then the general mood of literature; but it is a native product, with traits of its own and inward development from local conditions, not only apparent by its theme, but by its distinct evolution. Though it owed much to contact with Europe through its traveled scholars and its intellectual commerce by means of translations and imported books, and often dealt with matter detached from America both in prose and poetry, it was essentially self-contained. It was, in a marked way, free from the passions whose source was the French Revolution and its after-throes from 1789 to 1848; it is by this fact that it differs most from European romanticism. Just as the Puritan Rebellion in England left the colonies untouched to their own development, the political revolutions in Europe left the new nation unaffected to its normal evolution. There was never any revolution, in the French sense, in America, whether social, political, religious or literary; its great historical changes, such as the termination of English rule, the passing away of Puritanism, the abolition of slavery with the consequent destruction of the old South, were in a true sense conservative changes, normal phases of new life. In literature this state of things is reflected in the absence in it of any disturbance, its serenity of mood, its air of quiet studies. It is shown especially in its lack of passion. The only ardors displayed by its writers are moral, patriotic or religious, and in none of them is there any sense of conflict. The life which they knew was wholesome, regular, still free from urban corruption, the experience of a plain, prosperous and law-abiding people. None of these writers, though like Hawthorne they might deal with sin

or like Poe with horror and a lover's despair at death, struck any tragic note. No tragedy was written, no love-poetry, no novel of passion. No literature is so maiden-pure. It is by refinement rather than power that it is most distinguished, by taste and cultivation, by conscientiousness in art, in poetic and stylistic craft; it is romance retrospectively seen in the national past, or conjured out of foreign lands by reminiscent imagination, or symbolically created out of fantasy; and this is supplemented by poetry of the domestic affections, the simple sorrows, all "that has been and may be again" in daily human lives, and by prose similarly related to a well-ordered life. If it is undistinguished by any work of supreme genius, it reflects broadly and happily and in enduring forms the national traditions and character of the land in its dawning century.

The original impulse of this literature had spent its force by 1861 — that is, before the Civil War. The greater writers had, in general, already done their characteristic work, and though the survivors continued to produce till toward the close of the century, their works contained no new elements and were at most mellow fruits of age. The war itself, like the Revolution, left little trace in literature beyond a few popular songs and those occasional poems which the older poets wrote in the course of the conflict. Their attitude toward it and (with the exception of Whittier and Lowell) toward the anti-slavery movement which led up to it was rather that of citizens than of poets, though in the verse of Longfellow and Emerson there is the noble stamp of the hour, the impress of liberty, bravery and sorrow. Lowell is the exception; he found in the "Commemoration Ode" (1865) his loftiest subject and most enduring fame. The work began

to fall into new hands, and a literature since the war grew up, which was, however, especially in poetry, a continuation of romanticism and contained its declining force. It was contributed to from all parts of the older country and also from the West, and a generation has now added its completed work to the sum. No author, in this late period, has received the national welcome to the same degree as the men of the elder time; none has had such personal distinction, eminence or public affection; and none has found such honorable favor abroad, either in England or on the Continent. Poetry has felt the presence of the art of Tennyson, which has maintained an extreme sensitiveness among the poets to artistic requirements of both material and technique; and it also has taken color from the later English schools. It has, however, yielded its pre-eminent position to prose. The novel has displaced romance as the highest form of fiction, and the essay has succeeded the review as the form of criticism. The older colleges have grown into universities, and public libraries have multiplied throughout the North and West. The literature of information, meant for the popularization of knowledge of all kinds, has been put forth in great quantity, and the annual increase in the production of books keeps pace with the general growth of the country. Literature of distinction, however, makes but a small part of this large mass.

LATER WRITERS

In poetry the literary tradition was continued in Boston by Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836–1907), essentially a stylist in verse, brief, definite, delicate, who carried the lighter graces of the art, refinement, wit, polish, to a high

point of excellence. His artistic consanguinity is with Herrick and Landor, and he takes motive and color for his verse from every land, as his predecessors had done, but with effects less rich. He divided attention between drama and lyric, but as his dramas look strictly to the stage, it is on the lyrics that his reputation rests. He was master also of an excellent prose and wrote novels, sketches of travel, and especially stories, strongly marked by humor, surprise and literary distinction. In New York, Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833–1908) became the chief representative of the literary profession. He was both poet and critic, and won reputation in the former and the first rank in the latter field. His "Victorian Poets" (1875) and "Poets of America" (1885), followed by comprehensive anthologies (1895, 1900), together with "The Nature and Elements of Poetry" (1902), are the principal critical work of his generation, and indeed the sole work that is eminent. His verse, less practised as time went on, was well wrought and often distinguished by flashes of spiritual song and balladry. With him is associated his elder friend, Richard Henry Stoddard (1825–1903), who made his appearance before the Civil War, and whose verse belongs in general character to the style of that earlier period and is as rapidly forgotten. Both Stedman and Stoddard were of New England birth, as was also the third to be mentioned, William Winter (born 1836), better known as the lifelong dramatic critic of the metropolis. The last of the New York poets of established reputation, Richard Watson Gilder (1844–1909), was at first affiliated with the school of Rossetti, and his work in general, "Five Books of Song" (1894), strongly marked by artistic susceptibility, is in a high degree refined and delicate. In the country at large

popular success, in England as well as in America, was won by Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903), in "Hans Breitmann's Ballads" (1871), humorous poems in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect. Born in Philadelphia, he spent the greater part of his mature life abroad and wrote numerous works on diverse topics, but his reputation is chiefly connected with his books on gypsy life and lore. Another foreign resident who deserves mention was William Wetmore Story (1819–1895), the sculptor, of Massachusetts, connected with the Boston group, whose verse and prose gave him the rank of a *littérateur*. The South again entered into literature with the work of Sidney Lanier (1842–1881), in succession to Henry Timrod (1829–1867) and Paul Hamilton Hayne (1830–1886), who find a place rather by the affection in which they are held at the South than by positive merit. Lanier showed originality and a true poetic gift, but his talents were little effectual. From the West humorous poetry was produced by Francis Bret Harte (1839–1902), born in Albany, in "The Heathen Chinee" (1870) and similar verse, but he is better remembered as the artistic narrator of western mining life in his numerous stories and novels. Verse of a similar kind also first brought into literary notice John Hay (1838–1905), in "Pike County Ballads" (1871), who also wrote in prose; but his reputation was rather won as a statesman in the closing years of his life. Minor poets of less distinction but with a vein superior to that of the earlier period, more excellent in workmanship and more colored with imagination and mood, arose in all parts, of whom the most notable are Julia Ward Howe (1819–1910), in Boston, the venerable friend of many good causes, Henry Howell Brownell (1820–1872) of Rhode Island, author of the most vigor-

ous and realistic poetry of the Civil War, "War Lyrics" (1866), Edward Rowland Sill (1841–1887), born in Connecticut but associated with California, Henry Van Dyke (born 1852), in New York, better known by his prose in tale and essay, Silas Weir Mitchell (1830–1914), in Philadelphia, whose repute as a novelist has overshadowed his admirable verse, Eugene Field (1850–1895) of Chicago, James Whitcomb Riley (1853–1916), of Indiana, both distinguished for their humorous and childhood verse, and Joaquin Miller (1841–1913), of Oregon, whose first work, "Songs of the Sierras" (1871), had in it much of the spirit of the wild land, the color of the desert, the free, adventurous character of the filibuster, all strangely mixed with pseudo-Byronic passions.

WHITMAN

Apart from all these, whether minor or major poets, stands Walt Whitman (1819–1892), whose "Leaves of Grass" (1855) first appeared before the war, but whose fame is associated rather with its successive editions and its companion volumes, and definitely dated, perhaps, from 1867. He received attention in England, as did Miller, on an assumption that his works expressed the new and original America, the unknown democracy, and he has had some vogue in Germany mainly owing to his naturalism. His own countrymen, however, steadily refuse to accept him as representative of themselves, and his naturalism is uninteresting to them, while on the other hand a group apparently increasing in critical authority treat his work as significant. It is, in general, only by those few fine lyrics which have found a place in all anthologies of American verse that he is well known and highly valued in his own land.

THE LATER NOVEL

The chief field of literary activity has been found in the novel, and nowhere has the change been so marked as here. The romantic treatment of the novel practically disappeared, and in its place came the realistic or analytic treatment, rendering manners by minute strokes of observation or dissecting motives psychologically. This amounted to a substitution of the French art of fiction, in some of its forms, for the English tradition of broad reality and historical picturesqueness. The protagonist of the reform was William Dean Howells (1837–1920), a cultivated literary scholar, and a various writer of essays, travel sketches, poetry and plays, editor of many magazines and books, whose career in letters has been more laborious and miscellaneous than any other contemporary, but whose main work has been the long series of novels that he has put forth almost annually throughout the period. He not only wrote fiction, but he endeavored to make known to Americans fiction as it was practised in other lands, Russia, Italy, Spain, and to bring the art that was dearest to him into line with the standard of the European world. He was an apostle of the realistic school, and directed his teaching to the advocacy of the novel of observation, which records life in its conditions and attempts to realize what is in the daily lives and experience of man rather than what belongs to adventure, imagination or the dreaming part of life. Of his works, "The Lady of the Aroostook" (1879), "The Rise of Silas Lapham" (1885), "A Hazard of New Fortunes" (1889), are characteristic examples. He won a popular vogue, and if it is now less than it was, it is because after a score of years tastes and fashions change. The

conscientiousness of his art continues the tradition of American writers in that respect, and he is master of an affable style. His work, including all its phases, is the most important body of work done in his generation. Henry James (1843–1916), who mainly resided abroad, is his compeer, and in a similar way has followed French initiative. He also has been a various writer of criticism and travel and the occasional essay; but his equally long series of novels sustains his reputation. He has developed the psychological treatment of fiction, and of his work "The Portrait of a Lady" (1881), "The Princess Casamassima" (1886) and "The Tragic Muse" (1890) are characteristic. He has had less vogue owing to both matter and style, but in certain respects his power, more intellectual than that of Howells, has greater artistic elements, while the society with which he deals is more complex. He is really a cosmopolitan writer and has no other connection with America than the accident of birth. A third novelist, also a foreign resident, Francis Marion Crawford (1854–1909), falls into the same category. A prolific novelist, in the beaten track of story-telling, he has always a story to tell and excellent narrative power. The work regarded as most important from his hand is "Saracinesa" (1887) and its sequels; but his subjects are cosmopolitan, his talent is personal, and he has no effectual connection with his own country. The romantic tradition of the older times was continued by Lew Wallace (1827–1905) of Indiana, a distinguished general and diplomat, in his Mexican tale "The Fair God" (1873), and his oriental romances, "Ben Hur" (1880), one of the most widely circulated of American books, and "The Prince of India" (1893). A mode of the novel which was wholly unique was practised by Francis

Richard Stockton (1834–1902) in his droll tales, of which "Rudder Grange" (1879) is the best known.

The principal minor product of the novel lay in the provincial tale. The new methods easily lent themselves to the portraiture of local conditions, types and color. Every part of the country had its writers who recorded its traits in this way. For New England Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1812–1896), described the older life in "Old Town Folks" (1896), and was succeeded by Sarah Orne Jewett (1849–1909) and Mary Eleanor Wilkins (born 1862). The West was notably treated by Edward Eggleston (1837–1902) in "The Hoosier School Master" (1871), Mary Halleck Foote (born 1847) in "Led-Horse Claim" (1883) and Hamlin Garland (born 1860) in "Main Traveled Roads" (1891). The South was represented by Mary Noailles Murfee ["Charles Egbert Craddock"] (born 1850) in "In the Tennessee Mountains" (1884) and its successors, by Thomas Nelson Page (born 1853) in "Marse Chan" (1887) and other tales of the reconstruction in Virginia, and with most literary grace by George Washington Cable (born 1844), whose novels of Louisiana are remarkable for their poetic charm. The list is sufficiently illustrative of the general movement, which made what was called the dialect novel supreme for the season. This was succeeded by a revival of the historical novel in local fields, of which Winston Churchill (born 1871) in "Richard Carvel" (1899) is the leading exponent, and together with it the sword and dagger tale of the Dumas type, the special contemporary plot invented by Anthony Hope, and romance in its utmost forms of adventure and extravagance, came in like a flood at the close of the Spanish War. There were during the period from 1870 to 1900 many other writers of fiction,

who often proceeded in conventional and time-honored ways to tell their tale, but none of them is especially significant for the general view or as showing any tendencies of an original sort. The pietistic novel, for example, was produced with immense popularity by Edward Payson Roe (1838–1888), who shared the same vogue as Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819–1881), and both fell heir to the same audience which in the earlier period had welcomed "The Wide, Wide World" with the same broad acceptance.

ESSAYISTS

The essay, and the miscellaneous work which may be classed with it, was cultivated with most distinction by Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823–1911), one of the Boston group, a writer of the greatest versatility, as in his life he followed many employments, from that of preaching in a Unitarian pulpit to that of commanding a negro regiment in the Civil War. He has written good verse and excellent prose, and his familiar style, often brilliant with life and wit, especially becomes the social essay or reminiscent paper in which he excelled, and gives agreeableness to his writings in every form. "Atlantic Essays" (1871) is a characteristic book; and, in general, in his volumes is to be found a valuable fund of reminiscence about the literature and the times of his long life, not elsewhere so abundant or entertaining. Charles Dudley Warner (1829–1900) of Hartford, also in close touch in the latter years with the Boston group, was more gifted with gentle humor and of a literary temperament that made the social essay his natural expression. He won popularity by "My Summer in a Garden" (1870),

and was the author of many volumes of travel and several novels, but the familiar essay, lighted with humor and touched with a reminiscence of the Irving quality in sentiment, was his distinctive work. The long life of Edward Everett Hale (1822–1909), minister at Boston, was fruitful in many miscellaneous volumes, including fiction of note, "The Man Without a Country" (1868), but the most useful writing from his pen falls into prose resembling the essay in its form and manner of address, though cousin, too, to the sermon. John Burroughs (born 1837) of New York carried on in essay form the nature tradition of Thoreau, touched with Emersonianism in the thought, and after his example books of mingled observation, sentiment and literary quality, with an out-of-door atmosphere, have multiplied.

HUMOR

American humor often cultivates a form akin to the essay, but it also falls into the mold of the tale or scene from life. In the period before the Civil War, to sum up the whole subject in this place, it had the traits which it has since maintained, as its local tang, of burlesque, extravaganza, violence, but it recorded better an actual state of manners and scene of life in raw aspects. Its noteworthy writers were Seba Smith (1792–1868) of Maine, author of the "Letters of Major Jack Downing," which began to appear in the press in 1830; Augustus Baldwin Longstreet of Georgia in "Georgia Scenes" (1835); William Tappan Thompson (1812–1882), born in Ohio but associated with the South by descent and residence, in "Major Jones' Courtship" (1840), a

Georgian publication; Joseph G. Baldwin (1815–1864) in "Flush Times in Alabama and Mississippi" (1853); and Benjamin Penhallow Shillaber (1814–1890) in "Life and Sayings of Mrs. Partington" (1854). A fresh form, attended by whimsicality, appears in George Horatio Derby's (1823–1861) "Phoenixiana" (1855). In the war-times Robert Henry Newell (1836–1901) and David Ross Locke (1833–1888), respectively known as "Orpheus C. Kerr" and "Petroleum V. Nasby," cultivated grotesque orthography in a characteristic vein of wit; and with more quaintness and drollery Henry Wheeler Shaw (1818–1885) and Charles Farrar Browne (1834–1867), known as "Josh Billings" and "Artemus Ward," won immense popularity which extended to England. These latter writers were men of Northern birth, but of western and wandering journalistic experience as a rule. Their works make up a body of what is known as "American humor," a characteristic native product of social conditions and home talent. One poet, John Godfrey Saxe (1816–1887) of Vermont, attempted something similar in literary verse after the style of Tom Hood. The heir to this tradition of farce, drollery and joke was Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835–1910), known as "Mark Twain," born in Missouri, who raised it to an extraordinary height of success and won world-wide reputation as a great and original humorist. His works, however, include a broader compass of fiction, greater humanity and reality, and ally him to the masters of humorous creation. Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) of Georgia introduced a new variety in "Nights with Uncle Remus" (1883), which is literary negro folklore, and Findley Peter Dunne (born 1857) of Chicago, the creator of "Mr. Dooley," continues the older American style in its original traits.

HISTORY

History was represented in this period with a distinction not inferior to that of the elder group by Francis Parkman (1823–1863) of Boston, who, however, really belongs with the preceding age by his affiliations; his series of histories fell after the Civil War by their dates of publication, but they began with "History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac" (1851); he was the contemporary of Lowell and differed from the other members of the elder group, who survived, only by the fact of the later maturing of his work. He was not less eminent than Motley and Prescott and his history is of a more modern type. In the next generation the field of American history was cultivated by many scholars, and a large part of local history and of national biography was for the first time recorded. James Ford Rhodes's (born 1848) "History of the United States" (1892) holds standard rank; the various writings of John Fiske (1842–1901), distinguished also as a philosophical writer, in the colonial and revolutionary periods are valued both for scholarship and for excellent literary style; and Theodore Roosevelt's (1858–1919) "The Winning of the West" (1889) and his several biographical studies deserve mention by their merit as well as for his eminent position. The historians, however, have seldom sought literary excellence, and their works belong rather to learning than to literature. The same statement is true of the scholarship of the universities in general, where the spirit of literary study has changed. In the department of scholarship little requires mention beyond Horace Howard Furness's (1833–1912) life-long work on his "Variorum Edition of Shakespeare," the Shakespearian labors of Henry Norman Hudson

(1814–1886) and Richard Grant White (1821–1885), the Chaucerian studies of Thomas Raynesford Lounsbury (1838–1915) of Yale, and the translations of Dante (1867, 1892) by Charles Eliot Norton (1827–1908) of Harvard.

MODERN IDEAS

The period has been one of great literary activity, effort and ambition, but it affects one by its mass rather than its details; it presents few eminent names. The romantic motives fixed in early colonizing history as a taking possession of the land by a race of Puritans, pioneers, river-voyagers, backwoodsmen, argonauts, have been exhausted; and no new motives have been found. The national tradition has been absorbed and incorporated, so far as literature was able to accomplish this. The national character on the other hand has been expressed rather in local types, the color of isolated communities and provincial conditions for their picturesque value and human truth, and in commonplace characters of average life; but no broadly ideal types of the old English tradition have been created, and the great scene of life has not been staged after the manner of the imaginative masters of the past. There has been no product of ideas since Emerson; he was, indeed, the sole author who received and fertilized ideas as such, and he has had no successor. America is, in truth, perhaps intellectually more remote from Europe than in its earlier days. The contact of its romanticism with that of Europe was, as has been seen, imperfect, but its touch with the later developments and reactions of the movement in Europe is far more imperfect. With Tolstoy, Ibsen, D'Annunzio, Zola,

Nietzsche, Maeterlinck, Sudermann, the American people can have no effectual touch; their social tradition and culture make them impenetrable to the present ideas of Europe as they are current in literary forms. Nor has anything been developed from within that is fertile in literature. The political unity of the nation is achieved, but it is not an integral people in other respects. It has not the unity of England or France or even of the general European mind; it rather contains such disparate elements as characterize the Roman or the Turkish empire. It is cleft by political tradition and in social moral conviction, North and South, and by intellectual strata of culture East and West; it is still a people in the making. Its literature has been regional, as was said, centered in New England, New York, Philadelphia, contributed to sporadically from the South, growing up in Western districts like Indiana or germinating in Louisville in Kentucky, abundant in California, but always much dependent on the culture of its localities; it blends to some extent in the minds of the national reading public, but not very perfectly. The universities had not, on the whole, been its sources or fosterers, and they are now filled with research, useful for learning but impotent for literature.

THE END

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